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(Cortes)

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LIFE OF HERNANDO CORTES.

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THE LIFE OF

HERNANDO CORTES.

BY ARTHUR HELPS,

AUTHOR OF THE "SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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DEDICATION.

MY DEAR CARLYLE,

I DEDICATE this Life of Cortes to you. And I cannot content myself by making a simple dedication, but must write a letter, which I hope you will not consider to be too long, explaining several matters which I wish to explain to you.

This Life is not a mere extract from my History of the Spanish Conquest. It is true that I have made use of that part of my history which relates to the Conquest of Mexico, because I had given many years to that subject, and did not find much that I could alter. I went carefully, however, over every sentence quoted from that History, to see whether, by the aid of additional knowledge, I could correct or improve it; and I have added

greatly to those parts which especially concern the private life of Cortes.

I dedicate this work to you, because I desire an occasion to record my gratitude for all your kindness to me in times past. When you first honoured me by making me your friend, I was a mere youth, while you were in the full maturity of manhood; but you were always kind and tolerant to me; and we were from the first, as we have been ever since, the best of friends. In all our walkings, ridings, and talkings together, I cannot remember a single occasion in which a harsh or unkind word was ever said by one to the other.

I do remember that we were not always of the same mind in our discussions on things in general; but there were some points on which we did agree, and do agree, thoroughly. We both believe that there is such a thing possible as good government, and that it would decidedly be desirable that men should live under good government.

We also think that whatever a man does, he should take great pains in doing it, — that in short, good work is an admirable thing.

It is upon these points of resemblance that I also ask for your sympathy with Cortes. He was a man who loved good government, and did his work, according to his lights, thoroughly.

I have also an author's, as well as a friend's, reason for this dedication. Some time ago, you hinted to me—delicately but decisively—that there might be doubts as to the truth of the wonderful things I have told about Mexico. I assure you there ought to be no such doubts. Your experience will tell you that historians often read a book through, and only make use of it for a single fact, or for an epithet, or for a slight correction. No writer can parade all his authorities. Everything I have ever read about New Spain convinces me that I have not in the slightest degree exaggerated the wonders and the glories of ancient Mexico. The records for this history are immensely voluminous. There are, if I recollect rightly, ninety folio volumes of MS. in the collection of Muñoz. These I went over, as best I could, when residing at Madrid. It is a bold thing to say, but I am certain, that, only from the papers in the lawsuits there recorded, a

life of Cortes might be written which would not contradict what I have written.

I have thought over how I could most easily convince you, from other sources, that my impressions of the grandeur and civilization of the Mexican empire are not unfounded. And the best way that occurs to me is this—that I should show you three accounts, which are in my hands, of the principal market in the city of Mexico, as it existed at the time of the Conquest. These three accounts were written independently, each of the writers being unaware that the others had given any such account. One is from Cortes, addressed to the Emperor; another is from the common soldier, Bernal Diaz, whom neither Cortes, nor any one else in the army, suspected of being the principal historian of their great deeds; and the third is an account written by the man who is called "The Anonymous Conqueror," who must have been a companion of Cortes, but who seems to have been so much struck by the evidence of Mexican civilization, that he gave his mind chiefly to recording it, and hardly cared to chronicle the remarkable

adventures of himself and his fellow-countrymen.

These three accounts essentially coincide. Naturally, each observer enlarges upon those points which strike his peculiar fancy. There is also that discrepancy which is to be seen in the accounts of all independent observers. But, the effect produced upon the mind of the reader is the same. And this effect is, that Mexican civilization had reached a height, which, in many respects, was unequalled, at that time, in any known kingdom of the civilized world.

I have adopted a great many of the notes which are to be found in "The Spanish Conquest in America." Now these notes belong rather to a history than to a biography. I have, however, felt that in a case of this kind, where the authorities are such as cannot, from the rarity of the books or manuscripts, be consulted by the reader, it is desirable occasionally to adduce the very words which support any remarkable statement. Some wit has said that it is the peculiar privilege of Englishmen to skip anything in a book which they do not choose to read. Foot-notes are easily skipped; and those persons

who do not care to verify a statement—the trusting good souls who believe in their author—need not read them; but such men as you and Froude (he was with you when you threw a doubt upon the truthfulness of my Mexican grandeurs) will naturally consult them, and form your own opinions, whether with me or against me, upon my deductions from them.

I have now only to say, in conclusion, that I should not have presumed to dedicate to so indefatigable a student as yourself, this book of mine, if it had cost me no new researches, and if it did not contain my last and most carefully-weighed observations upon the matters to which it relates.

I am always,

Yours affectionately,

ARTHUR HELPS.

LONDON,
Feb., 1871.

P.S. Since writing the above, I have referred again to the work of "The Anonymous Conqueror;" and I find some notes in your hand-

writing on his account of the Market in Mexico. You are, therefore, charged with this knowledge; and I shall be able to show you, that, as I have said before, the other accounts do not essentially differ from that given by this Conqueror.

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HERNANDO CORTES.

CHAPTER I.

The Expeditions prior to that of Cortes—His early life—His appointment to the Command of an Expedition—Sets sail from Santiago.

THERE are few, if any, heroic persons who are more secure of fame than the principal discoverers and conquerors of the New World. Whether this fame is a blessing or a curse, I do not pretend to pronounce: I only say, that whatever the thing called "fame" may be worth, they must inevitably be blessed or cursed with the possession of it.

Their fame, too, must ever be more large and more lasting than the fame of any other discoverers and any other conquerors. Their discoveries and their conquests were made in regions hitherto unknown to mortals, in regions supposed by prac-

tical men to belong to the realms of fable rather than to those of real land and water.

Again, these discoverers and conquerors have not partaken the fate of their respective nations. When nations fall into decadence, the historical records of these nations have often ceased to have any interest for the rest of the world, and their heroes have lapsed into comparative obscurity. But the discoverers and conquerors of the New World hardly seem to have belonged exclusively to any nation. We look upon them as fellow countrymen to all of us of the Old World. They mainly aided in developing a new era in Europe, and they appeared like demi-gods upon the scene, to close great dynasties in that New World which they discovered and conquered. New nations will probably yet arise, whose historians will have to commence the histories of their nations with records of these discoveries and conquests.

As an illustration of what I mean, I venture to assert, that probably every youth who has had any education, either in the Old or the New World, has some knowledge of the deeds of Columbus, Cortes, and Pizarro, while one of the foremost generals in the world, of the same age

and the same nation, the "Great Captain," as he was justly called, Gonzalvo de Córdova, is unknown to these youths, even by name.

As for the Cid, though great poets and dramatists have done what they could to perpetuate his fame, how small is that fame when compared with that of either Columbus, Cortes, or Pizarro.

The character of Cortes.

The leader, whose life I am about to narrate, was an heroic adventurer, a very politic statesman, and an admirable soldier. He was cruel at times in conduct, but not in disposition; he was sincerely religious, profoundly dissembling, courteous, liberal, amorous, decisive. There was a certain grandeur in all his proceedings. He was very fertile in resources; and, while he looked far forward, he was at the same time almost madly audacious in his enterprises. This strange mixture of valour, religion, policy, and craft, was a peculiar product of that century.

It is not desirable, I think, for a biographer to describe in full detail the character of his hero at the commencement of the biography. It seems to me that he should rather wait to illustrate that character by events. There are, however, two main points in the character of Cortes, which I

shall dwell upon at the outset. These are, his soldier-like qualities and his cruelty. As a commander, the only fault to be imputed to him, was his recklessness in exposing himself to the dangers of personal conflict with the enemy. But then, that is an error to be commonly noticed even in the greatest generals of that period; and Cortes, from his singular dexterity in arms, was naturally prone to fall into this error. As regards his peculiar qualifications for a commander, it may be observed, that great as he was in carrying out large and difficult operations in actual warfare, he was not less so in attending to those minute details upon which so much of the efficiency of troops depends. His companion in arms, Bernal Diaz, says of him, "He would visit the hut of every soldier, see that his weapons were ready at hand, and that he had his shoes on. Those whom he found had neglected anything in this way he severely reprimanded, and compared them to mangy sheep, whose own wool is too heavy for them."

I have said that he was cruel in conduct, but not in disposition. This statement requires explanation. Cortes was a man who always determined to go through with the thing he had

once resolved to do. Human beings, if they came in his way, were to be swept out of it, like any other material obstacles. He desired no man's death, but if people would come between him and success, they must bear the consequences. He did not particularly value human life. The ideas of the nineteenth century in that respect were unknown to him. He had come to conquer, to civilize, to convert (for he was really a devout man from his youth upwards; and, as his chaplain takes care to tell us, knew "many prayers and psalms of the choir" by heart); and the lives of thousands of barbarians, for so he deemed them, were of no account in the balance of his mind, when set against the great objects he had in view. In saying this, I am not apologizing for this cruelty; I am only endeavouring to explain it.

Of all the generals who have been made known to us in history, or by fiction, Claverhouse, as represented by Sir Walter Scott, most closely resembles Cortes. Both of them thorough gentlemen, very dignified, very nice and precise in all their ways and habits, they were sadly indifferent as to the severity of the means by

which they compassed their ends; and bloody deeds sat easily, for the most part, upon their well-bred natures. I make these comments once for all; and shall hold myself excused from making further comments of a like nature when any of the cruelties of Cortes come before us—cruelties which one must ever deeply deplore on their own account, and bitterly regret as ineffaceable stains upon the fair fame and memory of a very great man.

One word more, to show that the cruelty of Cortes was a thing which unhappily belonged to his age, as well as to himself. Las Casas may blame it, but Las Casas was a man who belonged to our time, rather than to the sixteenth century. That for which his contemporaries chiefly blamed Cortes, was his conduct to Velazquez, which conduct, as we shall see, is a thing that admits of large excuse, and need never have greatly troubled the conscience of a man much more conscientious than Cortes ever pretended to be.

It is almost impossible to over-estimate the effect of the prevailing sentiments of the age in which a man lives, on the character of the man himself. These epidemic sentiments may entirely disguise or overlay the natural sentiments

of the man. Titus, so renowned for clemency, exposed to the slaughter of the arena thousands of human beings. The studious and gentle Pliny, who could perceive the virtue that there is in ill-health, and that men were often best when they were most infirm, could write to a friend in high provincial authority, telling him that it would have been an act of cruelty if he had refused to allow a gladiatorial spectacle.*

The conquest of Mexico could hardly have been achieved at this period under any man of less genius than that which belonged to Hernando Cortes. And even his genius would probably not have attempted the achievement, or would have failed in it, but for a singular concurrence of good and evil fortune, which contributed much to the ultimate success of his enterprise. Great difficulties and fearful conflicts of fortune not only stimulate to great attempts, but absolutely create the opportunities for them.

Before, however, bringing Cortes on the scene, the discovery of New Spain must be gradually traced back to its origin, and the connection must

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* See LECKY, *Hist. of European Morals.*

be shown which it had with previous enterprises of a like nature.

Pedigree of discovery in the New World.

Going back, then, to the earliest times of discovery, let us trace the descent of the great mariners and conquerors who preceded in, and made broad, the way for Cortes. The well-known

Columbus —Ojeda.

Ojeda was the companion of Columbus. Favoured by the powerful Bishop of Burgos, Ojeda became a discoverer on the Terra-firma. Then followed

Nicuesa and Ojeda.

the disastrous expeditions of Nicuesa and Ojeda. Ojeda dies in obscurity; Nicuesa perishes miserably; and Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, who had

Vasco Nuñez de Balboa.

come out, concealed from his creditors in the hold of a vessel, takes the command, as it were, of Spanish discovery. Very renowned, and more important even than renowned, were his discoveries. He discovered the South Sea: he came upon a civilization, in the neighbourhood of Darien, which was superior to anything that had been seen in the islands: he heard, in a dim way, of Peru.

Tidings of discovery reach Spain.

The tidings of great discovery near Darien reached the mother-country, and all Spain was excited with the idea of "fishing for gold." Vasco Nuñez was superseded, and Pedrarias sent out

with the most splendid and well-equipped armament that had yet left Spain for the Indies.

Armament of Pedrarias.

Now, among the hidalgoes who had come out with Pedrarias were several who, perceiving that nothing was to be done at Darien, asked permission of the Governor to go to Cuba; and Pedrarias, not knowing what to do with his soldiers, consented. One of these men was Bernal Diaz del Castillo, a simple soldier, who has, however, written a narrative of the most undoubted authority. This man tells us that he and his companions were received in a friendly manner by Velazquez, the Governor of Cuba, who promised to give them *encomiendas** of Indians, whenever there should be vacancies. As these vacancies, however, would only occur from the death of the proprietors, or the confiscation of their property (for the island of Cuba was already pacified, to use the phrase of that day), *encomiendas* of Indians fell vacant but slowly. The impatient conquerors,

Bernal Diaz.

Origin of De Córdova's expedition.

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* *Encomienda* is a word which has no equivalent in English. It means a body of men occupying a certain portion of land, which land was to be worked, and which men were to be employed, in almost any way that might be most profitable to the Spanish Lord.

who had now been three years from home, and had met with nothing hardly but disease and disaster, resolved to form an expedition of discovery on their own account. Taking into their company some Spaniards in Cuba who also were without Indians, this little party of discoverers amounted to one hundred and ten persons. They found a rich man of Cuba willing to join them, named Francisco Hernandez de Córdova, who was chosen as their captain, and who no doubt helped to furnish out their expedition. With their united funds they bought three vessels. One of these vessels belonged to the Governor Velazquez, and he wished to be paid in slaves for his share of the venture, requiring as a condition that the expedition should go to some islands between Cuba and Honduras, make war, and bring back a number of slaves. The gallant company, however, refused to entertain this suggestion. They said that what Velazquez required was not just, and that neither God nor the King demanded of them that they should make free men slaves.* Velazquez ad-

How Velazquez wished to be paid.

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* "Y desque vimos los soldados, que aquello que pedia el Diego Velazquez no era justo, le respondimos, que lo

mitted that they were right, and that their intention of discovering new lands was better than his. He aided them with the necessaries for the voyage, and they departed on the 8th of February, 1517, having on board a celebrated pilot, named Anton Alaminos, who, as a boy, had been with Columbus in one of his voyages.

De Córdova sets sail, Feb. 8, 1517.

When they had doubled Cape San Antonio,

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que dezia, no lo mandava Dios, ni el Rey; que hiziessemos a los libres esclavos."—Bernal Diaz del Castillo, *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva-España*, cap. 1. Madrid, 1632.

they took a westward course, navigating in a haphazard fashion, knowing nothing of the shoals, or the currents, or the prevailing winds. They could not, however, fail to make a great discovery, as any one may see who will look at the map, and observe how near to the continent the western extremity of the island of Cuba lies. Singularly enough, they found land at the nearest spot at which they could have found it, touching at the point of Cotoché. This point was named from the words *con escotoch*, which mean "Come to my house," a friendly invitation which the voyagers heard very often at this part of the coast. They could not but at once remark that the natives of this new-found land were more civilized in dress and in the arts of life than the inhabitants of the islands. They saw also a great town, to which they gave the name of Grand Cairo; and buildings made of stone and mortar were for the first time discovered by the Spanish conquerors. From what remains there are to be seen of buildings, even to the present day, in the province of Yucatan, we may well conclude how great an impression must have been produced upon those Europeans who were first permitted to see the signs of

Discovers land at P.Cotoché.

Yucatan.

a civilization which has puzzled the learned ever since. The natives of Yucatan had apparently, however, made more advance in the arts of life than in the higher attributes of sincerity and good faith. They invited the Spaniards to their houses, laid an ambuscade for them, and wounded several. The Spaniards, in their turn, succeeded in capturing two Indians, who afterwards became interpreters.

The expedition of De Córdova, having begun ill, continued to be unfortunate. The explorers went further westwards and discovered the Bay of Campeche, proceeding as far as Champoton; but they got into an encounter with the natives, lost a great many of their men, suffered from terrible thirst, and, after enduring many miseries, made their way back to Havana, and from thence to Santiago, where the Governor Velazquez then was. The news brought back by the expedition, and certain golden ornaments which they had to show (well-wrought, but not of pure gold), could not fail to stimulate Velazquez to further attempts at discovery. Indeed, the fame of De Córdova's voyage spread far and wide; various conjectures were instantly propounded as to who

De Cordova returns.

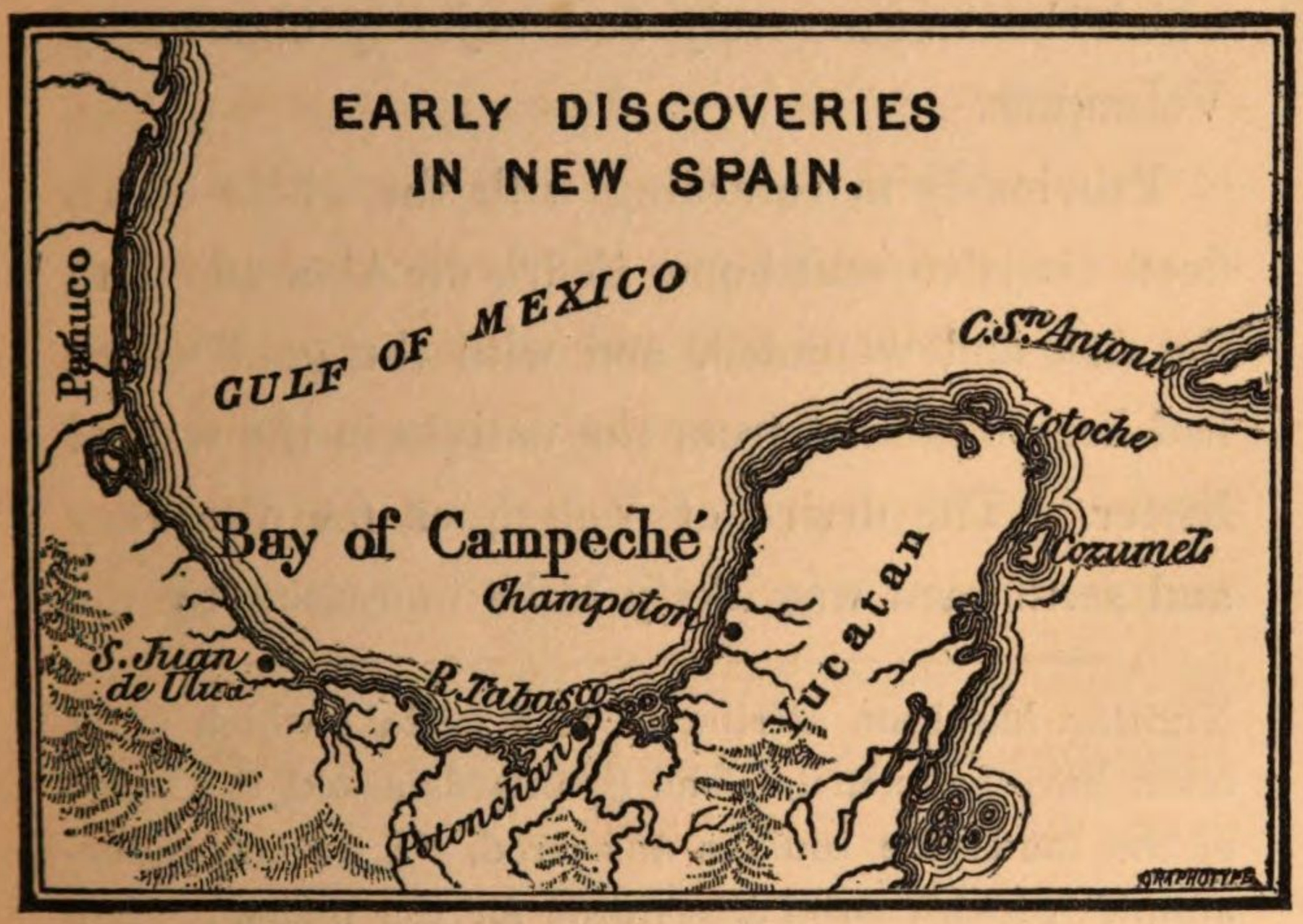
these islanders were who built houses of stone and mortar; and some ingenious persons were ready to declare that these Indians must be the descendants of those Jews whom Vespasian and Titus had driven into exile. Velazquez lost no time in fitting out another armada, the command of which was given to a young countryman of his, who was treated by him as a relative, and whose name was Juan de Grijalva. Pedro de Alvarado, a name afterwards too well known in American history, commanded one of the vessels in this expedition. Bernal Diaz was also employed, and Anton Alaminos went out as principal pilot.

Grijalva's expedition sails, April 5, 1518.

Grijalva set sail from Cuba on the 5th of April, 1518, and, his vessels being driven by the currents in a more southerly direction than the former expedition, first saw land at the island of Cozumel, and afterwards resuming the direction which De Córdova's expedition had taken the year before, extended the field of discovery.

Summing up the result of what took place in the course of these expeditions, we may say that they were so far successful that they made the Spaniards acquainted with the existence of new

lands on the continent of America, and with an Indian people of greater civilization than had hitherto been met with, who built houses instead of huts, and whose mode of dress was less primæval than the inhabitants of the islands. Such, with some gold, had been the result of the expe-



ditions under Hernandez de Córdova and Juan de Grijalva, up to the time at which our narrative commences.

Result of discoveries prior to Cortes.

De Córdova had discovered Yucatan;* and

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* De Solis and Pinzon had seen part of Yucatan in 1506, but had not landed. See NAV., *Col.*, vol. iii. p. 47. See also HERRERA, dec. I, lib. vi. cap. 17. The name of

Grijalva, entering the river Tabasco, which falls into the Gulf of Mexico, discovered New Spain, a name that was first given to that country in the course of this voyage.

Grijalva went as far as the province of Panuco, but made no settlement in those parts, for which he was severely and unjustly blamed by Velazquez.

Grijalva sends home Pedro de Alvarado.

Previously to returning with the whole of his fleet, Grijalva sent home Pedro de Alvarado with the sick and wounded, and with the gold which had been obtained from the natives in the way of barter. The desire of Velazquez for discovery and settlement was likely to be increased by the

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Yucatan has been attributed to a mistake which must often have happened. The Spaniards asked the name of the land; the Indians answered, "I do not understand," which passed afterwards for the name. "Los indios no entendiendo lo que les preguntaban, respondian en su lenguaje y decian YUCATAN YUCATAN, que quiere decir *no entiendo, no entiendo:* así los españoles descubridores pensaron que los indios respondian que se llamaba Yucatan, y en esta manera se quedó impropriamente á aquella tierra este nombre Yucatan."—NAVARRETE, SALVÁ, y SAINZ DE BARANDA, *Coleccion de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España*, tom. i., p. 418. Madrid, 1844.

accounts brought back by Alvarado; and, as Grijalva did not return so soon as was expected, Velazquez was anxious to gain tidings of what had become of him. This Governor, accordingly, prepared, or perhaps we should say, authorized the preparation of, a larger fleet than he had hitherto sent out; and, after some hesitation, conferred the command on Cortes.* From the Governor's instructions, it appears that one of the first objects of the expedition was to have been the search after Grijalva,† but that captain returned to Cuba before Cortes sailed.

Velazquez prepares a new fleet: gives the command to Cortes.

It will here be desirable to give a brief account of the previous life of this Commander, as much may be inferred from it in reference to the important transactions which are now to be narrated.

Hernando Cortes was born in the year 1485,‡

Birth and parentage of Cortes.

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* The Governor had at first offered the command to a certain Baltasar Bermudez; but he asked such conditions as Velazquez would not consent to. "Enójose con él, y hechóle de sí, quizá como solia, con desmandádas palabras."—Las Casas, *Hist. de las Indias*, MS., lib. iii. cap. 113.

† See the instructions given by Velazquez to Cortes, *Documentos Inéditos*, tom. i. p. 385.

‡ The day of his birth has been said to be the same as

at Medellin, in Estremadura. His father was Martin Cortes, of Monroy: his mother Donna Catalina Pizarro Altamirano. The mother of Cortes was a remarkable woman, as the mothers of distinguished men are wont to be. The writer of an anonymous life of Cortes, who was evidently well acquainted with the family of Cortes, as he mentions who was his nurse, and where she came from, thus describes the mother of Cortes:—"Catalina was not inferior to any woman of her time in honourable repute, in modesty, and conjugal love." Both father and mother were of good birth, but poor. The little Hernando was a sickly child; and many times during his childhood was at the point of death.

His education.

When he was fourteen years of age, his parents sent him to the University of Salamanca, where he remained two years, "studying

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that of Luther; but this is a mistake. A Spanish writer builds upon the supposed coincidence a contrast between the merits of the two: the one "persecuting;" the other extending the "Catholic Faith." "Nació este Ilustre Varon el dia mismo que aquella bestia infernal, el Pérfido Heresiarca Lutero, salió al mundo," &c.—PIZARRO, *Varones Ilustres del Nuevo Mundo*, p. 66.

grammar,"* and preparing himself for taking the degree of bachelor-at-law.

Weary of study, or, as appears probable, weary of the life of a poor student, Cortes returned, without leave, to his parents at Medellin. He neither found, nor made, a happy home for himself;† and he determined to seek his fortune as a soldier. For adventurous young men, at that time, two careers were open: to serve under the generous and splendid Gonsalvo de Córdova, in Italy, or to seek for renown and riches in the New World.

Resolves upon a soldier's life.

At this juncture, Nicolas de Ovando was just going out to supersede Bobadilla, in the Government of Hispaniola, and Cortes resolved to accompany that distinguished personage, also a native of Estremadura. But, while Ovando's armament was preparing, Cortes went one night "to speak with a lady," as his chaplain judi-

Will accompany Ovando.

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* This meant "a course of study in Latin and Greek, as well as of rhetoric." See note in FOLSOM's introduction to his translation of the despatches of Cortes. Madrid, 1772.

† "Daba í tomaba, enojos, í ruido, en Casa de sus Padres."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. I.

Meets with an accident.

ciously expresses it, and as he was walking upon the wall of the back court-yard, it fell with him. The injuries which the young lover then received, threw him into a fever, and before he recovered, the armament had sailed. He resolved, therefore, to adopt the other course—to go into Italy and take service under the Great Captain. With this view he went to Valencia, but in that city he fell ill again, and passed a year there of obscure hardship and poverty. Finally he returned to Medellin, with the firm intention of proceeding thence to the Indies. His parents gave him their blessing and some money; and, in his 19th year, A.D. 1504, he took his passage from San Lucar, in a merchant vessel, for St. Domingo, the chief town of Hispaniola. The voyage was a bad one, and the vessel on the point of being wrecked, a danger in which Cortes conducted himself with the bravery of one "who was to be engaged in other greater hazards."*

Takes his passage for St. Domingo. 1504.

A handsome, plausible, well-educated, well-born youth of the Governor's own province, who could tell him the local news at home, was sure

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* "Animábolos el Moço Cortés, como el que se havia de ver en otros maiores aprietos."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. I, lib. vi. cap. 13

to be well received by Ovando. Accordingly, Cortes was employed, under that Governor, in pacifying certain provinces which had revolted, or were considered by the Spaniards to have revolted; and when the war was ended, Ovando gave the young man an *encomienda* of Indians, and a notarial office in the town of Azua, which had been lately founded.

Obtains an *encomienda* in Hispaniola.

It is an interesting circumstance in the life of Cortes, that he was nearly accompanying Diego de Nicuesa, and would have done so, but for an abscess in the right knee. Had Cortes joined the expedition of Nicuesa, it probably would not have been so unfortunate. He might have filled the place that Vasco Nunez attained to; and his discoveries would then have naturally tended towards South America. But a still more arduous task was reserved for Cortes. His was not the nature to be satisfied with a tame provincial life, winning gold by the slow process of agriculture, or even by the swifter one of mining; and when the second Admiral, Don Diego Columbus, sent Diego Velazquez to subdue and colonize Cuba, Cortes accompanied him, and acted, it is said, as one of his secretaries.

Goes with Velazquez to Cuba.

After the island had been subdued, Cortes was

one of those who received a grant of Indians; but here again his unquiet intriguing nature did not suffer him to settle down at once into a pains-taking colonist, or a sedulous official man.

The story of his early life now becomes very confused, as is naturally the case with that of any man who rises to great eminence, and who was connected with some ambiguous transactions. His partizans will try and ignore these affairs altogether,—his enemies will know far more about them than ever happened; and the result is, that the future biographer will have to take a middle course, or, which is wiser perhaps, to side now with one party, now with the other, in a most uncertain and dubious manner, relying upon small traits of circumstance and delicate indications of character.

Cortes in disfavour with the Governor.

There are two stories of a very different kind, to account for the indignation which Cortes brought upon himself at one time from the Governor, Diego Velazquez. According to one of these accounts, news arrived at Cuba that certain Judges of Appeal, who had been appointed in Spain, had arrived in Hispaniola. It was not often the fortune of governors in the Indies to be popular,—at least, with more than

their own faction; and Velazquez formed no exception to this rule. The difficulty for those who thought they were aggrieved by him, was how to carry their complaints to the Judges. Cortes, who, no doubt (if the story be true), had some private grudge against the Governor, agreed to be the bearer of these complaints, and undertook the bold task of passing from one island to the other in an open boat.* He was, however, suspected, seized, and so completely found guilty in the Governor's estimation, that he wished to hang him. Certain persons, however, interceded for Cortes; and Diego Velazquez commuted the punishment into that of sending him as a prisoner to the island of Hispaniola. He was accordingly

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* Benito Martinez, who presented a memorial to the King, on behalf of Velazquez, in the year 1519, confirms this part of the story.—"Ansimismo dice: que porque este Hernando Cortés capitan, se levantó otra vez cuando la isla Fernandina se empezó de poblar con una carabela y con ciertos compañeros, é Diego Velazquez le prendió, y á ruego de muchos buenos le perdonó, é ahora ha hecho este otro buen hecho en se alzar con la isla, y para hacer su mal hecho bueno, dice mucho mal de Diego Velazquez, y todos los que en su nombre vienen."—*Documentos Inéditos*, tom. i. p. 408.

put on board a vessel bound for that island. Cortes, however, extricated himself from his fetters; swam, or, as it is said, floated on a log, back again to the shores of Cuba; and took refuge in a church. There he remained some days. A crafty alguazil lay in wait for him, caught him one day as, intent upon paying his addresses to a lady, he was tempted to go beyond the sacred precincts,* and made a prisoner of him. It seemed now as if the fate of Cortes was determined; but many persons interceded for him; and Velazquez, who was a violent, but good-natured man, the first burst of his wrath having been spent, forgave Cortes, but was unwilling to receive such a person into his service any more.

There are several things very improbable in this story,† and Gomara removes some of the

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* "Descuidándose un Dia, por salir á los amores, un Alguacil, llamado Juan Escudero, á quien Hernando Cortés ahorcó en Nueva-España, entrando por la otra puerta de la Iglesia, le abraçó por detrás, í le llevó á la Cárcel."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. I, lib. ix. cap. 9.

† It is improbable, for instance, that Velazquez should have wished to send Cortes to Hispaniola; and it is strange that the latter should have been so anxious to make his way back to Cuba.

stigma of it, by saying that Cortes went to Cuba, as an officer of Pasamonte,* the Treasurer, and was employed in the King's service, although the Chaplain admits that Velazquez also employed Cortes to manage business and to look after buildings.†

The other story is, that Cortes was required by Velazquez to marry a certain Donna Catalina Xuarez, one of a family of Spanish ladies who had come over in the suite of the Vice-Queen, Maria de Toledo,—the Governor himself being in love with one of her sisters. It is said that Cortes had given his word to marry Donna Catalina, and was unwilling to redeem it. However this may be, Cortes did marry her, and told Las Casas that he was as well pleased with her as if

Marriage of Cortes.

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* "Fernando Cortés fue á la conquista, por Oficial del Tesorero Miguel de Pasamonte, para tener cuenta con los Quintos, í Hacienda del Rei, í aun el mesmo Diego Velazquez se lo rogó, por ser hábil, í diligente."—Gomara, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 4. Barcia, *Historiadores*, tom. ii.

† "Tuvo gracia, í autoridad con Diego Velazquez, para despachar negocios, y entender en Edificios, como fueron la Casa de la Fundicion, y un Hospital."—*Ibid.*

she had been the daughter of a duchess.* In this story, too, he is spoken of as having been arrested, as having escaped, and as having taken refuge in a sanctuary. According to this account, also, he is made out to have had papers upon him which told against Velazquez.

For my own part I am inclined to acquit Cortes of that treachery towards Velazquez which might be inferred from the first story. But I suspect that Catalina Xuarez had considerable cause of complaint against Cortes, whose enmity against the Governor was probably provoked by his siding with her relations.

Cortes reconciled to the Governor.

Whichever may have been the true story, or whatever the truth in each story, it is certain that, after a serious feud, the Governor and Cortes became friends, and, as a proof of this, it is mentioned that Velazquez stood as god-father to one of the children of Cortes. After his marriage,

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* "Así que casóse al cabo no menos rico que su Muger; y en aquellos dias de su pobreza, humildad y bajo estado le oí decir, y estando conmigo me lo dijo, que estaba tan contento con ella como si fuera hija de una Duquesa."—Las Casas, *Hist. de las Indias*, MS., lib. iii. cap. 27.

Cortes employed himself in getting gold by means of his Indians:—"How many of whom died in extracting this gold for him, God will have kept a better account than I have," says Las Casas.

It must have been in the nature of Velazquez to forgive heartily, for we find that he not only did not molest Cortes any more, but that he conferred upon him the office of Alcalde in the town of Santiago, the capital of Cuba. Cortes, therefore, notwithstanding all his previous mishaps, was, in the year 1518, a rising and a prosperous man; and, being thirty-three years old, was at a fitting time of life for a career of vigorous adventure.

Opposition to the appointment of Cortes.

In conferring the command of the fleet on Cortes, Velazquez had been influenced by his secretary Andres de Duero, and by Amador de Lares,* the King's Accountant in Cuba; but he

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* Amador de Lares had been a long time in Italy, and Las Casas was wont to warn the Governor to "beware of twenty-two years of Italy." "Solia yo decir á Diego Velazquez por sentir lo que de Amador de Lares yo sentia: Señor, Guardaos de veinte y dos años de Italia." —Las Casas, *Hist. de las Indias*, MS., lib. iii. cap. 113.

disobliged several powerful persons in the island, relations of his own, who were not slow in suggesting that it was very imprudent to confide the expedition to Cortes. The old grudge between the Governor and Cortes was a good subject for these malcontents to dilate upon, and was, no doubt, made use of by all those who did not wish well to the newly-appointed Commander. The sentiments of these opponents to Cortes cannot be better illustrated than by some jests, which, perhaps, were all their own, but which were uttered in public by a buffoon in the household of Velazquez, named Cervantes. As this buffoon

Foresight, or knavery, of a buffoon.

was one day accompanying Cortes and the Governor to the sea-side, where they wished to observe how the vessels were getting on, and was a little ahead of the party, uttering his pleasantries, he turned to the Governor, and said, "Diego." "Well, fool, what do you want?" replied the Governor; "Look what you are about! we shall have to go and hunt after Cortes." Upon this, Cortes is said to have made some angry answer, which I do not believe in, as it does not show his usual skilfulness and self-command. But it is more probable that Andres de Duero replied for

him, saying, "Be quiet, you drunken idiot! do not play the rascal any more; we know well that these malicious things which pretend to be jests, do not come from you."* But the buffoon, not by any means dismayed, went on saying all the way, "Viva, viva! to the health of my friend Diego, and of his lucky Captain, Cortes! and I swear, my friend, that I shall go with Cortes myself to these rich lands, that I may not see you crying, my friend Diego, at the bad bargain you have just made."

It would be difficult to say what impression these sayings, and many like them, uttered in jest and in earnest, produced upon the uncertain mind of the Governor. One thing, however, he should have recollected, that if half trust is unwise in dealing with a friend, anything less than unbounded confidence is too little trust in dealing with a reconciled enemy—especially one who has been injuriously treated.

Obliterate enmity by complete confidence.

With regard to the Governor's power to remove Cortes, which some have denied, I have no

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* "Calla, borracho loco, no seas mas vellaco, que bien entendido tenemos, que essas malicias socolor de gracias, no salen de tí."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 19.

doubt that it was amply sufficient for the purpose, up to the moment of starting. It is a difficult question, which there are not facts fully to decide, what part Cortes contributed to the expenses of the expedition. His partizans assert that it was two-thirds of the whole; but their own statement will hardly bear out that.* Cortes, like Cæsar, whom we shall find he resembles in other respects, was fond of expense, and was probably an indebted man. There is no doubt that whatever Cortes did advance was chiefly borrowed † capital, and borrowed on the

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* "Oyó decir á los de la cuidad que el dicho Cortés habia gastado mas de 5,000 castellanos, é que el dicho Diego Velazquez le habia prestado para ello 2,000 castellanos sobre cierto oro que tenia por fundir, é que oyó decir que el dicho Diego Velazquez habia puesto 1,800 castellanos en rescates é vinos é otras cosas, é tres navíos, el uno era bergantin, é que el dicho Cortés demas de los 5,000 castellanos puso siete navíos suyos, é de sus amigos é de efectos."—*Documentos Inéditos*, tom. i. p. 487.

† "Y como ciertos Mercaderes, amigos suyos, que se dezian Jaime Tria, ò Geronimo Tria, y un Pedro de Xeres, le vieron con Capitania, y prosperado, le prestaron quatro mil pesos de oro, y le dieron otras mercaderias sobre la renta de sus Indios."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 20.

security which his appointment by Velazquez afforded, for it is quite ridiculous to assert that he had any independent powers from certain Jeronimite Fathers, who were ruling at Hispaniola.

I must remark here upon the deplorable manner in which all these expeditions were managed, the Governor descending to the condition of a merchant-adventurer, and being concerned in the profits of each enterprise. The lamentable result of this practice was seen in all the Spanish settlements; and it was a practice unfortunately sanctioned and partaken by the Spanish Monarchs themselves.

Governors should not be traders.

The complicated form of government, also, in the Spanish Indies had the worst results. Diego Velazquez was the Vice-roy of a Vice-roy; and the person from whom he held authority, Don Diego Columbus, had been, to a certain extent, superseded by other authorities. A surer mode of creating factions could not have been devised. Authority, like land, cannot be held by too simple a tenure, and intermediate interests are fatal to the improvement of the country to be ruled, as of the soil to be tilled.

Indirect tenure of authority injurious.

It was on the 15th of November, 1518, that

Grijalva returns, Nov. 15, 1518.

Grijalva returned to Santiago, bringing with him many tempting signs of the riches of the country he had begun to discover. It is by no means improbable that his arrival produced some considerable change* in the mind of Velazquez, which would be observed, and rendered more and more unfavourable to Cortes, by those who had already reminded the Governor that the newly-appointed captain was "an Estremaduran, full of high, crafty, and ambitious thoughts."†

It is important to enter into these details with respect to the departure of Cortes, as so much of his future conduct depended upon the position he

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* Such is GOMARA's account ("Bolvió á Cuba Joan de Grijalva en aquella mesma saçon, í huvo con su venida mudança, en Diego Velazquez."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 7. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. ii.), and this is one of the instances in which there does not appear any motive that Cortes could have for deceiving his chaplain.

† "Que era el Estremeño, mañoso, altivo, amador de honras, í Hombre que se vengaria en aquello de lo pasado."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 7. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. ii.

The reader will observe the influence which a man's place of birth had upon his fortunes in Spain.

was to take up now in reference to his employer, Velazquez. In truth, the fate of a great empire hung upon the whisperings of certain obscure and interested persons, on the hired jests of a buffoon, and on the petty provincial jealousy which was apt to make an Estremaduran hateful to a Biscayan or to an Andalucian.

Much may be said upon the singular injustice, not to speak of the folly, of depriving Cortes of such a command, after having once confided it to him. His means, his credit, everything that he possessed, were pledged. He had even altered his style of dress, and wore for the first time a plume of feathers,* that well became his very handsome countenance, which, however, needed no such adornment to make it distinguished as that of one who was fit to rule his fellow-men. The wisdom of this change of dress may well be questioned. It added, no doubt, to the envious sayings uttered against him; and Cortes should, by this time, have known men well enough to be

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* "É demas desto se començo, de pulir, é abellidar en su persona, mucho mas que de ántes, é se puso un penacho de plumas con su medalla de oro, que le parecia muy bien."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 20.

aware that it is in little things of this kind that you can the least venture to offend them.

Cortes eager to sail.

It is probable that the Governor began to think of conferring the command of the expedition upon some other person, and that, intelligence of this change of disposition being conveyed to Cortes, did not render him less alert in his endeavours to get his fleet equipped, and to make a start. To suppose, however, that he really did slip away by night, and that, on the Governor being apprized of it, he hastened to the shore, and that a dramatic conversation took place, in which Cortes said that "these things, and things like them, should be done before they are thought of,"* seems to my mind entirely improbable. In fact, such a story is nearly certain to be the mythical form in which the transaction would come to be related, the fact merely being, that Cortes made immense and perhaps secret

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* "Y parando allí dicele Diego Velazquez, í como Compadre así os vais? es buena manera esta de despediros de mí? Respondio Cortés: Señor, perdóneme Vuestra Merced, porque estas cosas y las semejantes ántes han de ser hechas que pensadas: vea Vuestra Merced que me manda."—Las Casas, *Hist. de las Indias*, MS., lib. iii. cap. 114.

haste to get the ships ready, and to take leave of the Governor.

There is a story, which doubtless is true, as Las Casas had it from the mouth of Cortes himself, that he laid hold of all the cattle which a certain butcher had in his possession, who was bound under penalty to supply the town of Santiago, and that Cortes paid for what he seized by a gold chain, which he took off his own neck and gave to the butcher.*

All this haste,† which was afterwards, no doubt, made known to Velazquez, would naturally give him an additional reason for wishing

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* "Reclamando, aunque no á voces porque si las diera quizá le costara la vida, que le llevarian la pena por no dar carne al pueblo; quitóse luego Cortés una cadenilla de óro que traia al cuello, y diósela al obligado Carnicero, y esto el mismo Cortés á mí me lo dixo."—Las Casas, *Hist. de las Indias*, MS., lib. iii. cap. 114.

† Mr. Prescott is persuaded that the story of the clandestine departure of Cortes is true; but this painstaking and truth-loving historian is, I think, in this instance misled by Las Casas, who, though truthful, was credulous, and in this case was not an eye-witness, and was not, as Mr. Prescott supposes, residing at that time on the island. The story of the purchase of the provisions may be quite correct, and this I believe to be all

to supersede Cortes, as showing that Cortes had divined what had been the Governor's thoughts. The astute Estremaduran, far from avoiding Velazquez at this critical period, took care to be constantly with him, and to be always showing him the greatest attention and respect.* I should, therefore, prefer giving credence to the simple account of Bernal Diaz, who was present, and who says, "Andres de Duero kept advising Cortes that he should hasten to embark, for that the Velazquez party (*los Velazquez*) kept the Governor in a state of excessive changefulness by the importunities of those who were his relations; and after Cortes perceived this, he ordered his wife, Donna Catalina, to see that all the provisions and the dainties, which wives are accustomed to make for their husbands, especially for such an expedition, were immediately em-

How Bernal Diaz narrates the departure of Cortes.

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that Las Casas could quote Cortes for, when he says immediately afterwards, "esto el mismo Cortés á mí me lo dixo."

The truth probably is that Cortes sailed suddenly, but not clandestinely.

* "De lo qual tenia dello aviso el Cortes, y á esta causa no se quitava de la compañia de estar con el Governador, y siempre mostrandose muy gran su servidor."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 20.

barked on board the ships. And then he gave orders, by sound of trumpet, that all the masters, and pilots, and soldiers should be ready, and that on such a day and night none of them should remain on shore. And, after he had given that command, and had seen them all embarked, he went to take leave of Diego Velazquez, accompanied by his great friends and companions, Andres de Duero and the Contador Amador de Lares, and all the principal inhabitants of the city; and, after many parting salutations from Cortes to the Governor and from the Governor to Cortes, he took leave of him: and the next day, very early in the morning, after having heard mass, we went to the ships, and the same Diego Velazquez turned to accompany Cortes, and many other hidalgoes, until we were about to sail, and with a prosperous voyage in a few days we arrived at the town of Trinidad."*

It is to be remarked, as strongly confirming the account of Bernal Diaz, that Velasquez himself, in a letter of complaint against Cortes, to be laid before the Emperor, says nothing about

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* Bernal Diaz, cap. 20.

Cortes having stolen away, but simply describes the transaction thus: "I sent in that Armada 600 men, amongst whom I named as captain and principal leader of it and them, a certain Hernando Cortes." Velazquez then proceeds to say why he chose Cortes—namely, because he appeared to be a judicious man and a great friend of his (the Governor's), and also because he had had much experience of the Governor's way of dealing with the colonists from Spain and the native Indians.*

Cortes sets sail from Santiago.

It was on the 18th of November, 1518, that Cortes and his companions set sail from Santiago.

His banner, made of taffety, displayed a red cross on a black ground, sprinkled with white and blue flames;† and, inside the border, was a motto which said, "Let us follow the Cross, and in that sign we shall conquer."‡

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* "Carta de Velasquez al Figueroa." "De lo que habia fecho Fernando Cortes." Nov. 17, 1519.

† I suppose the proper heraldic description would be, "Sable, semée of flames argent and azure; a cross, gules."

‡ Herrera, "Hist. de las Indias," dec. II. lib. iv. cap. 6.

CHAPTER II.

Cortes refuses to be superseded—Sails for Cozumel—Thence to Tabasco—His first victory in New Spain—Sails on to St. Juan de Ulua—Is chosen General—Enters Cempoala—Founds Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz—Sends messengers to the Spanish Coast—Destroys the Fleet.

CORTES proceeded on his way, and was fortunate enough to obtain, by promises of payment, with force visible in the background, supplies of provisions, both from the King's stores at Macaca, and from a laden vessel which he met with. In fact, as he said afterwards, he played the part of a "gentleman corsair." After he had arrived at Trinidad, formal orders came from Velazquez to Verdugo, the Alcalde Mayor of that town, to deprive Cortes of the command. But this was now too late. Cortes, as De Solis remarks, knew how to gain men's hearts, and how "to be a superior without ceasing

Velazquez would deprive Cortes of the command.

to be a companion." Indeed, he gained over the messengers whom Velazquez sent; and such was the disposition of the fleet towards its Commander, that it would have been impossible for Verdugo to supersede Cortes. He did not attempt it. In truth, this was a most unreasonable proceeding on the part of Velazquez; and though it may be said, that Cortes would have shown a higher nobility of mind if he had obeyed the orders of his superior, yet it could hardly be expected that an ambitious young man, who had spent all his money, and become indebted, in order to engage in this expedition, should suffer himself to be deprived of his command in this capricious manner. He wrote a letter of remonstrance and re-assurance to Velazquez, and then sailed on to Havana. A similar missive to the former one from Velazquez reached the Alcalde there; but it had no effect. The Alcalde did not dare to arrest Cortes, who wrote another letter to Velazquez in the same strain as before, and then set sail, on the next day, the 10th of February, 1519, for the island of Cozumel.

Cortes does not obey.

This series of transactions was very important. Cortes had now settled the course of his career.

He could not return, like Hernandez de Córdova or Grijalva: there was nothing now left for him but ruin, or such ample success as should efface all previous disobedience and misconduct.

The armament consisted of five hundred and fifty Spaniards, two or three hundred Indians, some few negroes, and twelve or fifteen horses, and, for artillery, ten brass guns and some falconets. Bernal Diaz rightly gives a list and an account of the horses.* In truth, it would be

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* "The Captain Cortes, a dark chestnut horse, which died immediately on arriving at San Juan de Ulua.

"Pedro de Alvarado and Hernando Lopes de Avila, a very good chestnut mare for draught or for riding: and, after we came to New Spain, Pedro de Alvarado bought the half of the mare from Lopes de Avila, or took it from him by force.

"Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero, a grey mare, a good charger, which Cortes bought from him with some gold cord."

And so there follows a list of thirteen people, each of whom had one of these valuable possessions, and the last man mentioned, Juan Sedeño, was considered the richest man in the armament, for he possessed a ship, a mare, a negro, some cazabi-bread and bacon; and, as Diaz remarks, at that time neither horses nor negroes were to be had except at great expense.

difficult to estimate the number of men that one horse might be considered equivalent to.

Cortes lands at Cozumel.

Upon the landing of Cortes at Cozumel the inhabitants fled; but, Cortes capturing some of them, and treating them kindly, the rest returned, and proved submissive and obliging hosts to the Spaniards.

It was at Cozumel that Cortes, "who put great diligence into everything he did,"* called Bernal Diaz and a Biscayan named Martin Ramos, and asked them what they thought was meant by the words, "Castillan, Castillan," which he was told the Indians of Cotoché had addressed to them when they were in the expedition of Hernandez de Córdova; and Cortes added that he had thought about this many times,† and that by chance there might be Spaniards in those lands. Accordingly, inquiries were made; it was ascertained that there were Spaniards somewhere in that country, and Cortes caused search to be made for them. It was not successful then, and the fleet sailed away; but on its return to Cozumel (which oc-

Search for Spaniards lost on that coast.

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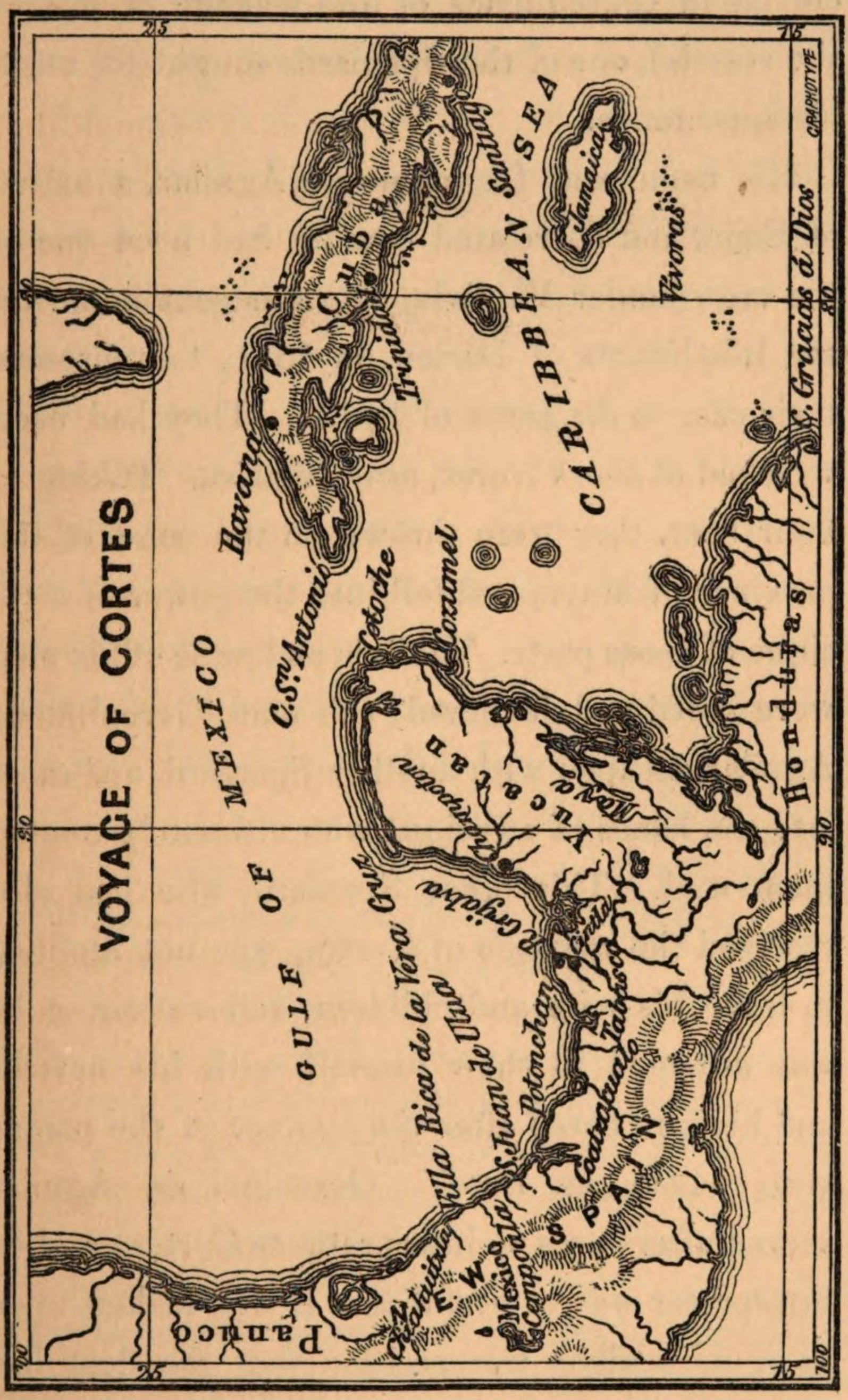
* "En todo ponia gran diligencia."—BERNAL DIAZ.

† Cortes does not seem to have communicated that it was part of his instructions to look for these men.


VOYAGE OF CORTES
GULF OF MEXICO
CARIBBEAN SEA
Havana
C. St. Antonio
Trinidad
Cotoche
Cozumel
Yucatan
Campeachy
Tabasco
Vera Cruz
Tuxpan
Panuco
Jamaica
Honduras
Gracias á Dios
Campeachy
Mexico
W.
E.
S. Juan de Ulua
Rio de la Vera Cruz
Guatimala
Chiapa
Huatusco
Orizaba
Potonchan
Coatzacualco
Tabasco
Mexico
Campeachy
SPAIN
25
75
80
90
95
100

curred in consequence of the leakage of one of the vessels), one of the Spaniards sought for made his appearance.

Geronimo de Aguilar is found.

His name was Geronimo de Aguilar, a native of Ecija, and he related how he had been one of the crew under Valdivia, who was sent home by the inhabitants of Darien, in 1511, to represent their case to the court of Spain. They had been wrecked at the Vívoras, near Jamaica. Taking to their boat, they were thrown on the coast of the province of Maya, and fell into the power of a cacique of those parts. Valdivia and some of his men were killed and devoured; this man, Geronimo de Aguilar, escaped with another Spaniard, and came into the hands of a cacique who ultimately treated them well. This other Spaniard, who had also received the message of Cortes, was not inclined to leave his wife and children, and moreover he was ashamed to show himself with his nostrils and his ears bored after the manner of the people with whom he lived. Geronimo de Aguilar served afterwards as interpreter to Cortes; and an

A favourable omen and a singular advantage.

interpreter was so useful that it was looked upon as a miraculous interposition that the fleet had been obliged to return to Cozumel, and had thus

secured, at the outset of their undertaking, the services of so valuable a comrade.

It is worthy of notice that the inhabitants of Cozumel were found to worship an idol in the shape of a cross.* This statement is amply confirmed by the discoveries recently made in Central America.†

Leaving Cozumel, and passing round the coast of Yucatan, Cortes made his entry at the river of Grijalva into New Spain. After some resistance from the natives, he disembarked, and took possession of the country in the name of the Spanish Monarch. Proceeding inland, he found that he was in a territory called Tabasco; and there oc-

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* "En medio del qual havia una cruz de Cal, tan alta como diez palmos, á la qual tenian, í adoraban por Dios de la Lluvia."—GOMARA, *Crónica*, cap. 15.

"Era Cozumél el mayor Santuario para los indios que habia en este reino de Yucatan y á donde recurrian en romeria de todo él por unas calzadas que le atravesaban todo, y hoy permanecen en muchas partes vestigios dellas."—DIEGO LOPEZ COGOLLUDO, *Historia de Yucatan*, lib. i. cap. 6. Campeche, 1842.

† See Stephens's "Central America," vol. ii. p. 345, where there is an engraving of a tablet at Palenque, in which two priests are making offerings to a highly ornamented cross.

First battle with the Indians of New Spain, March 25, 1519.

curred his first great battle with the natives. They behaved with the most conspicuous courage. Bernal Diaz says: "I recollect that, when we let off the guns, the Indians uttered loud cries, and whistling sounds, and threw earth and straw into the air, that we should not see the damage which we were doing to them; and then they sounded their trumpets, uttered their warlike cries, and shouted, 'Ala Tala.'" It appears that the Tabascans had some notion of an ambuscade; but all their military skill and prowess were of little avail against the horses and the cannon of the Spaniards. Many of the Spaniards were wounded in this encounter, and two of them died of their wounds. Gomara speaks of St. James having appeared in the battle on a white horse; but Bernal Diaz, while admitting that such might have been the case, says that "he, sinner as he was, was not worthy to be permitted to see it."

The battle of Cintla.

This battle was called the battle of Cintla; and to commemorate their success, the Spaniards changed the name of the chief town of the Tabascans from Potonchan to that of Santa Maria de la Vitoria.

The victory was of the utmost service to

Cortes. It made the Tabascans submissive to him; and, with other presents which they brought to the conqueror, were twenty female slaves, whose business it was to make bread, and who carried with them the stones between which, after the Oriental fashion, they were accustomed to pound their maize. Amongst these Indian women was a person of great intelligence, who was destined to play a considerable part in the conquest of Mexico. The story of her life was a singular one. Though found in the condition of a slave, she was of high birth, being the daughter of a cacique who ruled over Painala as his principal town, and possessed other dependent towns. Painala was in the Mexican province of Coatzacualco: she was accordingly able to speak Mexican. Her father died when she was but a girl, and her mother married another cacique, a young man. They had a son born to them, and wishing to secure the heritage for him, and to despoil her, they gave her by night to some Indians of Xicalango, pretending to their own people that she had died. From these masters she passed, probably by sale, to the Tabascans, by whom, as we have seen, she was presented to Cortes. She was

Donna Marina: her early life.

baptized under the name of Marina; and afterwards served faithfully as an interpreter. Indeed, her fidelity was assured by the love which she bore to her master. Bernard Diaz says that "She was handsome, clever, and eager to be useful" (one that will have an oar in every boat); "and she looked the great lady that she was."

There is hardly any person in history to whom the ruin of that person's native land can be so distinctly brought home, as it can be to the wicked mother of Donna Marina. Cortes, valiant and skilful as he was in the use of the sword, was not less valiant, (perhaps we might say not less audacious,) nor less skilful, in the use of the tongue. All the craft which he afterwards showed in negotiation, would have been profitless without a competent and trusty interpreter. Now Marina knew two languages. She knew the Mexican language, which was spoken at her birthplace; she also knew the language of Tabasco. Now the language of Tabasco was the same as that spoken in Yucatan. The little island of Cozumel, where Geronimo de Aguilar was found, lies just off the coast of Yucatan; and the language of Yucatan was spoken there. This Gero-

Donna Marina as an interpreter.

nimo, therefore, and Donna Marina could understand one another perfectly; and the process of interpretation went on in this way: Cortes spoke to Geronimo in Spanish; he translated it into Yucatanese; and then Donna Marina rendered it into Mexican. After a little time the beautiful Donna Marina learnt Spanish; and then the services of Geronimo de Aguilar were dispensed with. If a medal had been struck to commemorate the great deeds of Cortes, the head of Donna Marina should have been associated with that of Cortes on the face of the medal; for, without her aid, his conquest of Mexico would never have been accomplished.

Cortes, who from the first showed himself intent upon conversion, placed a cross in the great temple of Potonchan; and, before his departure, celebrated, with what pomp he could, the feast of Palm Sunday, Padre Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo and the Licentiate Juan Diaz having endeavoured to instruct the Tabascans in the rudiments of Christianity. Gomara says that the Tabascans broke their idols and received the cross; but the account which a much later historian gives is the more probable one,—namely, that their docility

was more inclined to receive another God than to renounce any one of their own.*

Cortes arrives at San Juan de Ulua.

Immediately after his celebration of the feast of Palm Sunday, Cortes returned to his ships, and, continuing his voyage, arrived at San Juan de Ulua on Holy Thursday of the year 1519. A little incident occurred in the course of this voyage, very characteristic of the men and of the time. As they coasted along, keeping close to the shore, the former companions of De Córdova and Grijalva kept pointing out to Cortes those parts of the coast with which they were familiar, naming this river, and that town, this mountain, and that headland. Remarking the conversation, a certain cavalier named Alonso Hernando de Puertocarrero, approached Cortes, and said, "It seems to me, Señor, that these gentlemen, who have been twice to this land, have been saying to you,

'Behold France, Montesinos,
Behold Paris, its chief city,

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* "Pero solo se encontraba en ellos una docilidad de rendidos mas inclinada á reciber otro Dios, que á dexar alguno de los suyos."—De Solis, *Conquista de la Nueva-España*, lib. i. cap. 20.

Behold the waters of the Douro,
Where they fall into the sea.'*

I say to you, observe these rich lands, and know well what to do." To which Cortes replied, "Let God give us good fortune in battle, as he gave the Paladin Roldan; for the rest, having such men as yourself and other cavaliers for captains, I shall know well what to do."

It is possible that Puertocarrero did not make the allusion without a little touch of satire, but the words may also have conveyed a serious meaning, and appear to have been so construed by Cortes. It is one of the chief merits of a popular literature, whatever its kind, that it affords the means of so much being conveyed, when so little is said. Montesinos, in the Spanish romance, alluded to, is the grandson of Charlemagne. His parents are banished from court, upon the suggestion of a false enemy named

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* "Romances Caballerescos," núm. 29. G. B. Depping, "Romancero Castellano."

"Cata Francia, Montesinos,
Cata Paris, la ciudad,
Cata las aguas de Duero
Do van á dar en la mar."

Tomillos. Montesinos is brought up in a hermit's cell; and, when the youth becomes complete in the knowledge of arms, his father takes him up to a lofty eminence, and there, without any affront to the geography of romances in the middle ages, points out to him, in the stanza quoted above, Paris and the Douro, the palace of the King, and the castle of his enemy, Tomillos. The youth goes to court, enters the hall of Charlemagne's palace, observes Tomillos cheating the King at a game of chess, points out the fraud, and eventually strikes the false player dead. He then discovers his own lineage, and is the means of restoring his parents to their former rank. There is a peculiar felicity in the date of the day on which the father of Montesinos shows Paris to his son,* which was the day of St. Juan, after whom, as well as in honour of Juan Grijalva, the discoverer, St. Juan de Ulua had been named.

The Montesinos of Romance.

It is a fancy of mine that Cortes unconsciously

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* "Á veinte y cuatro de Junio,
Dia era de san Juan,
Padre y hijo paseando
De la ermita se van."

Romances Caballerescos, núm. 28. DEPPING, *Romancero Castellano.*

betrayed a little of his own character, in naming the Paladin Roldan as his hero. The crafty and valorous exploits of that knight are well described in a romance, which makes him have no scruple in allowing his beloved Donna Anna to suppose that he is slain, in order that he might have his revenge upon the Knights of the Round Table; and where, disguised as a Moor, he takes the command of an army of Moors, in order to betray them.*

Cortes not unlike the Paladin Roldan.

At San Juan de Ulua, Cortes met with a friendly reception from the natives; and immediately after his arrival, there came some Indians, sent by the Governor and Captain-General of that province, to enquire, on the part of their King, Montezuma, why Cortes had made his appearance on that coast. The Spanish Commander replied, that he had come to treat with their Prince upon matters of great importance, and he

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* See the romance beginning—

" Dia era de san Jorge,
Dia de gran festividad.
Aquel dia por mas honor
Los doce se van á armar."

Romances Caballerescos, núm. 12. DEPPING, *Romancero Castellano*.

His interview with Montezuma's officers.

asked to see these officers. They accordingly came the next day to see him. Their mode of showing honour to Cortes was very singular. One of them burned incense before him, and also little straws touched with his own blood. Then they listened to his story, that the cause of his coming was to treat with their master on the part of Don Charles of Austria, Monarch of the East,—and they made him rich presents; but they entirely put aside any hope of his being allowed to see their Sovereign. Cortes replied, that kings always received ambassadors, and that he was resolved not to quit the country without seeing Montezuma. At this declaration, they were so alarmed, that they offered to send to their Monarch for an answer; and, as these officers of Montezuma were accompanied by skilful painters, who depicted with accuracy all that they saw amongst the Spaniards, they were able to convey a full representation of what had occurred to their Monarch.

Mexican Painters.

The alert mind of Cortes, anxious to adopt every opportunity for impressing the Mexicans (that was the name of the people over whom Montezuma ruled) with a sense of his power,

prepared a review for the officers of the King, and an additional subject for the artists. He ordered the cannon to be heavily charged, and all his horsemen, under the command of Pedro de Alvarado, to prepare for exercise. The horses were to have on their poitrals, with bells attached to them. "If we could have a charge upon the sand-hills," he said, "it would be good; but they will see that we sink into the mire. Let us repair to the shore when the tide is going out, and make a charge there, going two abreast." This cavalry movement was accordingly executed in presence of Montezuma's officers. Then came the principal show of the day. The cannon were discharged, and the stone-balls went re-echoing over the hills* with a great noise, which was the

A review in the presence of Montezuma's officers.

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* This is an instance of a considerable difficulty which occurs from a double meaning of a Spanish word. "El monte" means a "wood," and also a "mountain," or "hill;" and frequently it requires the minutest knowledge of geography to know how the word should be rendered. In the present instance the passage is *iban las piedras por los montes retumbando con gran ruido.*— BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 38. From the nature of the coast, I have adopted the rendering in the text, though not without some doubts as to its propriety.

better heard, as it happened to be a calm day. All these things were represented by the Mexican painters as best they could; and never, perhaps, in the history of the world, was there brought to a monarch such a picture of the destruction that impended over his kingdom. The awful writing in the hall of Belshazzar was not more significant than this picture would have been to Montezuma, could he rightly have appreciated all that it depicted.

After an entertainment which Cortes gave to these officers of Montezuma, he had another conversation with them through his interpreters, Geronimo de Aguilar and Donna Marina, in the course of which he asked if the Mexican King had any gold, and being answered in the affirmative, he said, "Let him send it me, for I and my companions have a complaint, a disease of the heart, which is cured by gold."

An answer came back from Montezuma, in seven days, and was brought by Teotlili, one of the officers who had before met Cortes. He brought with him magnificent presents from the King, and, amongst other things, a sun of gold, which he laid before Cortes, informing him that

Montezuma sent these things to show how he estimated the friendship of that king (Charles the Fifth), but in the present state of affairs, it was "not convenient" to allow Cortes to present himself at the Mexican court. Certainly, from the official style of this reply, we may conjecture that the Mexicans had reached a high state of what is called civilization.

Montezuma declines to receive Cortes.

Cortes received the presents with all due deference; but said that it would be impossible for him to desist from his undertaking. The honour of his King forbade it. This he said so angrily, that the officers of Montezuma offered to send again to their Sovereign for instructions, and they did so. Meanwhile, Cortes despatched Francisco de Montejo, accompanied by the celebrated pilot Anton Alaminos, to seek a port that might be a better station for them than the present one, which was a barren and desert place vexed by mosquitoes. They returned with the intelligence that they had found a port twelve leagues off, close to a fortress named Chiahuitzla.

Cortes perseveres.

Montezuma resolved not to receive these strangers; and a more peremptory answer than

Montezuma again refuses.

the last, but accompanied, as it had been, with presents, was conveyed by Teotlili to Cortes. It happened to be evening time, when the Spanish Commander was about to reply to this second message, and the Ave Maria bell was heard from that vessel in the squadron which served as a church. The Spaniards fell on their knees to pray. Teotlili enquired from Marina what this meant; and Cortes thought it a good occasion to commence the work of conversion, which, to do him justice, was always in his mind. For this purpose he brought forward Father Bartolomé de Olmedo, who endeavoured to give Teotlili some insight into the mysteries of the Catholic Faith, and into the nature of his own idolatry. Then Cortes continued the discourse, intimating that conversion was one of the chief objects of his Sovereign; and that, having come so far on such a great affair from so mighty a king, he must persevere in his attempt. The Mexican ambassador, in much anger and confusion, broke off the conference.

Cortes persists.

The next morning there were no Indians to assist the Spaniards and to bring them food. The friends of the Governor Velazquez murmured

against Cortes, and Diego de Ordaz told him that the army was averse to proceeding, and that the means at his disposal were not sufficient for the conquest of such an empire as Montezuma's. Cortes replied by dwelling on the success which had hitherto attended the expedition; but admitted, that if the soldiers were so disheartened as Ordaz asserted, it would be madness to attempt such an enterprise, and that they must consider about their return to Cuba. He, accordingly, published an order for the return of the fleet to that island.

Proclamation for return to Cuba.

It must not be supposed that Cortes took this important step without having thoroughly prepared for it, by sounding his chief partizans as to the course they were inclined to take, and, probably, conveying to them his own wishes. The way in which the camp was split into two factions, and the underhand negotiations that went on, cannot be better seen and appreciated than by the short account which Bernal Diaz gives of what happened to himself. "One night, a little after midnight, came to my hut Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero, Juan de Escalante, and Francisco de Lugo (Lugo and I were, in some

The partizans of Cortes combine.

sort, relations, and from the same country), and they said to me: 'Señor Bernal Diaz del Castillo, come hither with your arms to go the rounds, for we will accompany Cortes, who is making the rounds.' And when I was at some little distance from the hut, they said to me: 'Look, Señor; keep secret for a little time that which we are going to tell you, for it is of much importance, and your companions in the hut must not hear it, who are of the faction of Diego Velazquez.' And what they said to me was the following: 'Does it seem good to you, Señor, that Hernando Cortes should have brought us all here under a delusion, and given out proclamations in Cuba that he was coming to make a settlement, and now we have learnt that he has no authority for that, but only for trading; and they wish (the change of person may here be noted) that we should return to Santiago with all the gold that has been taken, in which case we should all be ruined men, and Diego Velazquez would take the gold as he did before?'"

They confer with Bernal Diaz secretly at night.

They then reminded Bernal Diaz that he had been three times in that land and had gained nothing, and they ended their address to him by

suggesting that they should agree to form a settlement in the name of His Majesty, the Emperor; that they should elect Cortes as Captain; and inform His Majesty of what they had done.

It was not possible that these private dealings could go on unobserved by the opposite faction. A camp is not a cabinet, and secrets leak out even from a cabinet. The followers of Velazquez protested against such underhand proceedings; but their protestations were too late. When the proclamation for return was made known to the soldiers, most of them became furious with Cortes, and declared that they would not go back to Cuba. It was remembered how ill Grijalva had been received by Velazquez, because he had returned without founding any settlement. Prepared to utter such complaints as they were fairly entitled to make, they came into the presence of Cortes. This crafty leader had his followers now exactly in the temper in which he must have desired, and which he had schemed to evoke. He affected a difficulty in acceding to their wishes; and the tone which he adopted on the occasion is well described, by one who heard him, in the words of the sly proverb, "You may entreat me

Cortes is pleased to be persuaded by his men.

to do that which I like to do" (*tu me lo ruegas, y yo me lo quiero*). A speech has been made for him* which probably does not differ much in substance from that which he really uttered. He tells the clamorous malcontents of his having been informed that it was their desire to return home: to please them he had yielded; but he was glad to find them in a disposition more fitting for the service of their King and the duty of good Spaniards. However, as he did not wish to have unwilling soldiers, it must now be understood, that whoever desired to return to Cuba could do so, and that he would provide for the embarkation of all those who would not voluntarily partake his fortunes.

Just at this period, or a little before, when Cortes and his companions were feeling somewhat desolate and disheartened, there came messengers from the chief of a neighbouring territory, called Cempoala, desiring the friendship of the Spaniards. The town of Cempoala was on the way to Chiahuitzla, that port of which Cortes had heard from

The Chief of Cempoala invites Cortes.

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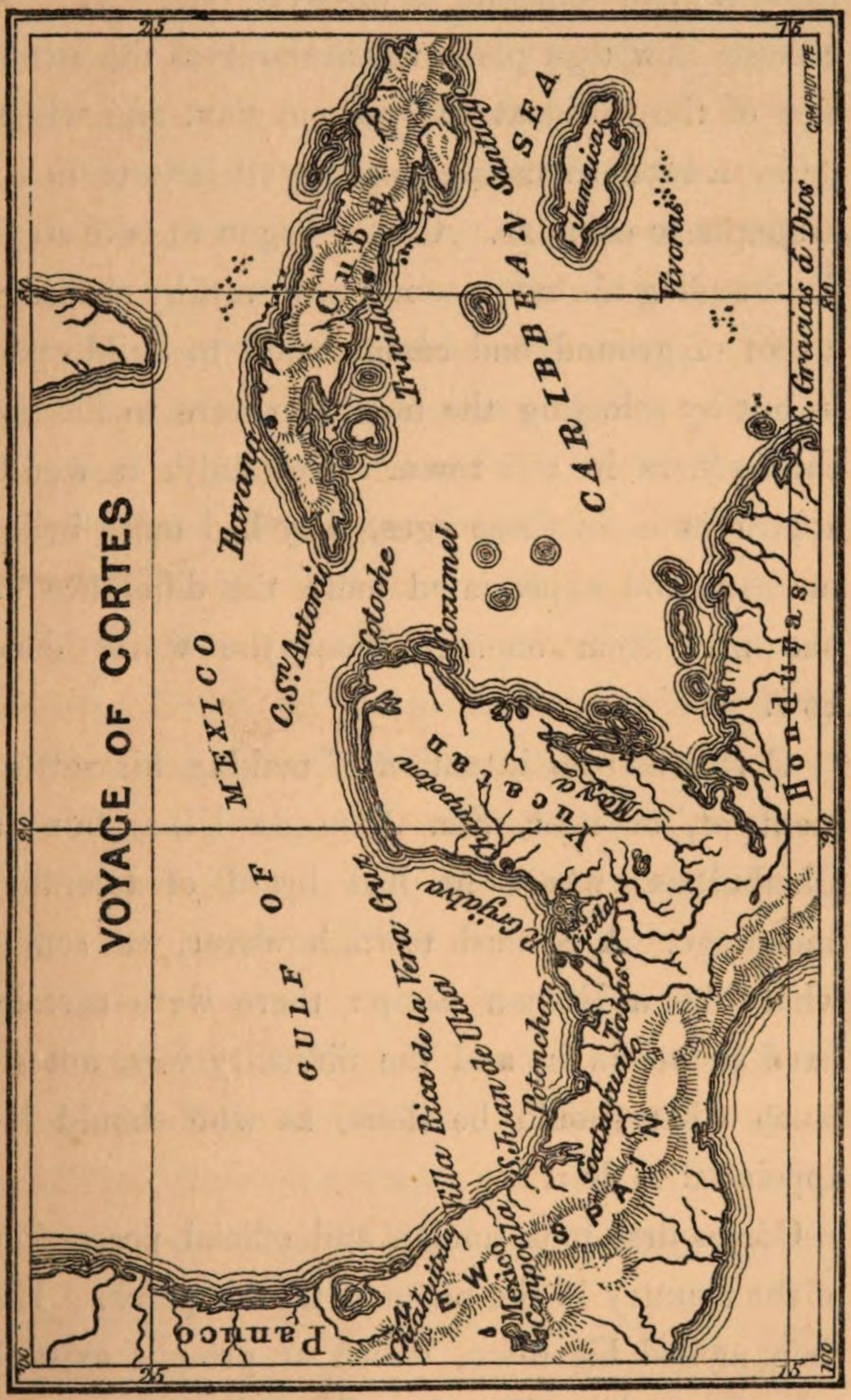
* De Solis, "Conquista de la Nueva-España," lib. ii. cap. 6.


VOYAGE OF CORTES
MEXICO
GULF OF
CARIBBEAN SEA
Havana
Trinidad
C. St. Antonio
Cape Catoche
Cozumel
Yucatan
Honduras
Gracias á Dios
Guatimala
Vera Cruz
Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz
S. Juan de Ulua
Guasacualco
Tabasco
Campoala
Mexico
Panuco
Chiahuitla
N. W.
SPAIN
GRAPHOTYPE

those he had sent out to discover one. A proceeding now took place which deserves the attention of the world at the present day, and which many a modern nation might well imitate in its attempts to colonize. Cortes began to take steps for founding his town,—not, however, by choosing a spot of ground, and commencing to build upon it, but by selecting the men who were to fill the chief offices in the town. Certainly, it would appear as if, in those ages, they had more belief in men, and appreciated more the difference of one man from another, than the world does now.

A good mode of founding a town.

Cortes had no intention of making his settlement at, or near, San Juan de Ulua, but at Chiahuitzla, where he had heard of tolerable anchorage. A Spanish town, however, was somewhat like a Roman camp: there were certain fixed points in it, and the difficulty was, not so much what should be done, as who should be appointed to do it.

Cortes first took solemn and official possession of the country in the name of the Emperor. He then named his town, which at present existed only on paper, calling it "La Villa Rica de la

Vera Cruz."* He then appointed the requisite officers. It appears, too, that either he or his party suggested, that a formal requisition should be made to him, apparently in writing, demanding in a most peremptory manner that the main object of the expedition should be changed from that of trade to that of colonization; and that he should take upon himself to appoint the *Alcaldes* and *Regidors* of the new town. The Alcaldes named were Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero (a native of Medellin, the birthplace of Cortes) and Francisco de Montejo. The Regidors were Alonso Davila, Pedro de Alvarado, with his brother Alonso, and Gonzalo de Sandoval, also a native of Medellin, a young man of twenty-two, who will afterwards take a great part in the conquest, and who was much beloved by Cortes. Juan de Escalante was appointed the *Alguazil Mayor*. Cristoval de Olid was to be the Master of the Camp (*el Maestro del Campo*). There were other minor appointments which need not be recorded. These appointments were, no doubt, skilfully

Change of plan in the Expedition.

Cortes names the chief officers of Vera Cruz.

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* "Porque el Viérnes de la Cruz havia entrado en aquella Tierra."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 30.

made by Cortes, affording due encouragement to his friends, and offering the requisite temptation to those amongst his enemies who might be gained over.

The foundations for authority were now laid, and we must own that the deficiency of original authority was endeavoured to be supplied in the most skilful manner. Recounting the various steps in due order, we find that it was voted universally, or at least determined by the majority, that the object of the expedition, as stated in the original instructions (of the purport of which they had not been aware), must be entirely changed, and accordingly that these instructions did not apply to the changed circumstances. Then, the process may be summed up as follows: Cortes rises from the mass as their chosen leader; and, at their request, appoints officers. When these are appointed, he recognizes their authority to the utmost extent. He appears bare-headed before them, and renounces his authority of Captain-General and Justicia-Mayor, placing it in the hands of the *Alcaldes* and *Regidors*. He then leaves the assembled officers of government to confer amongst themselves. They, as might be

The process by which authority is brought into due form and shape.

expected, resolve upon reappointing him; and the next morning come to him, to make their determination formally known,—which intelligence he receives with proper official gravity, as if it were something new to him.* He is pleased to accept the appointment; and they are allowed to kiss the hands of the new Captain-General and Justicia-Mayor, who is thus placed, with some show of legality, at the head of the military and the civil services.

Cortes re-appointed as Captain-general and Justicia-mayor.

In the midst of all these proceedings, Cortes had not forgotten the friendly invitation which he had received from the Cacique of Cempoala; and, indeed, he is stated to have made use of this invitation as an argument to show that there were alliances which might be formed against the Mexicans, and people with whom he might negotiate, when he had once made a settlement.†

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* "El Dia siguiente, de mañana, el Regimiento fué á buscar á Hernando Cortés, el qual, como si nada supiera de el caso, preguntó, qué era lo que mandaban?" —HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. II. lib. v. cap. 7.

† "I aun tambien para desde allí poder con mas facilidad tener amistad, í Contratacion, con algunos Indios, í Pueblos Comarcanos, como era Cempoallan, í

Nothing, therefore, could be more fortunate than this offer of welcome from Cempoala, which Cortes did not fail in due time to embrace; and, marching to their town, was very kindly received. Thence he moved on to Chiahuitzla, still in the same territory, where also he was well received by order of the Cacique of Cempoala. Near to Chiahuitzla, Cortes, working with his own hands, founded his town of Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz;* and the appointed officers took charge of it. This town was of much importance to Cortes: it was a stronghold in the rear, and Juan de Escalante, who had the chief command, was a devoted friend, on whom Cortes could rely.

Cortes enters Cempoala.

Begins to build Vera Cruz.

The town being now founded, it was resolved,

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otros, que havia Contrarios, í Enemigos, de la Gente de Motecçuma." — GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 30.

* See the proceedings (mentioned in Gomara, cap. 37, and incidentally confirmed by Chimalpain and Bustamante, cap. 35) in reference to the actual building of the town, when sites were marked out for the church, the grand square, the town hall, the wharf, and the shambles and the town was called Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz, *as they had agreed when the Council of St. Juan de Ulua was nominated* (como havian acordado, quando se nombró el Cabildo de San Juan de Ulhua).

in full council, that information should be sent to Charles the Fifth of what had been done; and the

Sends messengers to Spain.

two alcaldes, Alonso Hernandez de Puertocarrero and Francisco de Montejo, were chosen for this purpose. They went to Spain, carrying rich gifts with them, but unfortunately found the Emperor absent, and were ill received by the Bishop of Burgos, the head of the colonial administration, who favoured Velazquez, and considered these messengers as persons who had been concerned in a revolt against the constituted authorities.

Discovers a conspiracy, and punishes the conspirators.

Meanwhile, Cortes did not hesitate to use his newly-acquired authority with vigour, and discovering a conspiracy which was formed by some of the party of Velazquez to leave the army, and to give information to that Governor which might enable him to seize the messengers of Cortes on their way to Spain, he caused two of the principal conspirators to be put to death, and inflicted minor punishments upon the others. "I remember," says Bernal Diaz, "that when Cortes signed that sentence, he said with deep sighs and signs of suffering, 'Oh! who would not be ignorant of writing, so that he might not have to sign the death warrants of men.'" *

Resolves to destroy his fleet.

It was during his stay in the territory of Cempoala, that Cortes adopted that determination to destroy his fleet, and so to cut off all means of retreat from his army, which has become one of the great texts in history. I say "adopted," because though Cortes himself may have originated the idea of destroying the fleet, and then

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* "Acuérdome, que quando Cortés firmó aquella sentencia dixo con grandes suspiros y sentimiento: O quién no supiera escrivir, para no firmar muertes de hombres!" —Bernal Diaz, cap. 57.

have insinuated it into the minds of his adherents,* it is certain that they also counselled the destruction of the fleet. There were many good reasons for this counsel. It was necessary to bind the two factions together in some indissoluble manner. Again, in such a small body, where every man was valuable, the sailors were an important addition to the little army. Even those who were disabled men, or unsuited for a marching expedition, sufficed for garrison duty in the new town of Vera Cruz. The magnanimity of the transaction is diminished by its evident policy; and with regard to Cortes himself, it required no extraordinary valour on his part. He had cut off all retreat for himself when he refused to allow himself to be superseded by the orders of Velazquez. For Cæsar to pass the Rubicon might have been a great resolve, but for his soldiers, nothing: in the destruction of this Spanish fleet, the men incurred a danger which their Commander had already brought upon himself, and

Obvious motives for destroying the fleet.

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* "Platicando con Cortés en las cosas de la guerra, y camino para adelante, de plática en plática le aconsejámos los que eramos sus amigos, que no dexasse navío en el puerto ninguno."—Bernal Diaz, cap. 58.

thus reduced themselves to the level of his own desperation. Juan de Escalante was entrusted with the execution of the orders that Cortes gave for the fleet's destruction, which, after the anchors, sails, and cables had been taken out, was summarily effected.

Cortes continued to maintain a strict amity with the Cempoalans; it was in an expedition that the Spaniards made, while in this territory, that he caused a man to be hanged for stealing two fowls. The man was cut down, however, when half dead, by Alvarado.

Cortes frees the Cempoalans from tribute to Mexico.

While Cortes was in Cempoala, Montezuma's collectors of tribute came into the country. The Cempoalans complained much of the Mexican king's exactions, saying that he demanded their children for slaves and for sacrifices. Cortes seized the officers, and ordered that no tribute should be paid. But, privately, he let two of them go free with a peaceful message to Montezuma, and the others he preserved from the fury of the Cempoalans, who, when they had overcome their terror of the great King's officers, by seeing them imprisoned, were very desirous to turn the tables

upon these Mexicans, and to offer them up as a sacrifice to the local divinities.

This is one of many instances which show the vigour and crafty wisdom of Cortes, in his preparations for the conquest of Mexico. Indeed, his conduct at this period of his fortunes might be taken as a model by all those who may be placed in similar circumstances. As a snake through tangled grass and herbage, or rather, like an agile wild beast through the forest, now lightly leaping over the brushwood, now bounding along the open space under great trees, always with an eye to prey, always with a soft footfall, so did the politic Cortes move through the difficulties which beset his position,—the conspiracies of dubious followers, the snares of uncertain allies, the perils of an unknown country, and the weight of countless numbers brought to bear upon his little band, which was but the scenic counterfeit of an army.

The policy of Cortes.

These sacrifices of human beings, which the Mexicans and the Cempoalans were so ready to inflict upon each other, were an abomination to Cortes; and he resolved to put an end to them in this province, and, indeed, to the whole scheme of

Cortes attacks idolatry in Cempoala.

idolatry of the Cempoalans; which he accomplished by main force, sending a body of troops to hurl the idols down from the temple. The use of violence, if ever justifiable in matters of religion, is so in warring against a cruel creed which has for its groundwork the fears of men, and is perpetually cemented by the blood of the weak amongst its worshippers. It was not, however, to be supposed that a people who had been oppressed by a malign religion for so many years would part with their burden easily. The most galling fetters come to be believed in as amulets, mistaken for ornaments, and fondly clung to as supports. Accordingly, the Cempoalans rushed to arms, that they might avenge this insult to their gods. But Cortes, whose Violence, being for the most part the violence of the head, was never far removed from her severe, but serene sister, Policy, took the precaution at once to seize upon the Cacique and the principal chiefs, and to declare that they should be put to death if any outrage was attempted against the Spaniards. The threat was successful; and the people were pacified, or rather awed into submission. Cortes then had the walls of the temple cleared of

Cempoalans take up arms for their gods.

blood. He erected an altar there, changed the priests' vestments from black to white, and gave *them* the charge of this altar. He also set up a cross, and taught the natives to make wax candles, and to keep them burning before the altar.

The next step of Cortes was to receive the Cempoalans into the vassalage of the King of Spain. Certainly this man's audacity throughout borders upon the ludicrous; and the way in which the strange tale was first told, in grave official documents, does not diminish to an intelligent reader the grotesque wildness of the transactions, though narrated as if they were mere matters of course.

Cortes commences his march to Mexico, August 16, 1519.

On the 16th of August, 1519, Cortes set off for Mexico, resolved to see, in the quaint language of the unsuspected historian who accompanied him, "what sort of a thing the great Montezuma was* of whom they had heard so much."

Cortes himself had already assured his Sovereign that he would take Montezuma, dead or

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* "Que seria bueno ir á ver que cosa era el gran Monteçuma."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 53.

alive, if he did not bring him into vassalage to the Spanish crown.*

This is not the place for giving any more than a very rapid account of the advance of Cortes; but, previously to his great battles with the Mexicans or their subjects, it will be advisable to show what were the advantages which each side possessed.

Comparative means of the belligerents.

The Mexicans had immense superiority in point of numbers. They were not, like the Indians of the islands, a people living in huts, but in good, stone-built edifices. They formed a mighty kingdom, mighty at least in appearance, with dependent states, that paid tribute to the King of Mexico, but which, as soon appeared, were by no means devoted to him.

Weapons of the Mexicans.

The weapons of the Mexicans were lances, darts, bows and arrows,†

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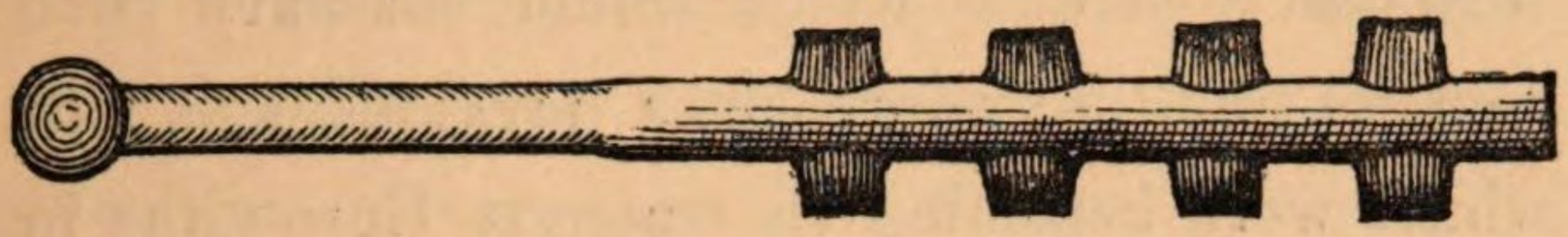
* "En la otra Relacion, * * * certifiqué á Vuestra Alteza, que lo habría preso ó muerto, ó Súbdito, á la Corona Real de Vuestra Magestad."—LORENZANA, p. 39.

† "It was usual for a number of archers to assemble together, and throw up an ear of maize into the air, at which they immediately shot with such quickness and dexterity, that before it could reach the ground it was stripped of every grain."—CLAVIGERO's *History of Mexico*, book vii. p. 367—note.

slings and stones, and a kind of sword of a most fearful nature and aspect.*



I have recounted the means on the Mexican side, which consisted of innumerable men, who

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* "The *Maquahuitl*, called by the Spaniards *Spada*, or sword, as it was the weapon among the Mexicans which was equivalent to the sword of the old continent, was a stout stick, three feet and a half long, and about four inches broad, armed on each side with a sort of razors of the stone *itzli* (obsidian), extraordinarily sharp, fixed and firmly fastened to the stick with gum-lac, which were about three inches long, one or two inches broad, and as thick as the blade of our ancient swords. This weapon was so keen, that once it entirely beheaded a horse at one stroke, according to the affirmation of Acosta; but the first stroke only was to be feared; for the razors became soon blunt. They tied this weapon by a string to their arm, lest they might lose it in any violent conflict."—CLAVIGERO, *Hist. of Mexico*, bk.vii. p.367. These are the words of Acosta: "Sus armas eran unas navajas agudas de pedernales puestas de una parte y de otra de un baston, y era esta arma tan furiosa, que afirman que de un golpe echavan con ella la cabeça de un cavallo abaxo cortando toda la cerviz."—*Hist. Nat. y Moral de Indias*, lib. vi. cap. 26.—The engraving in the text is a representation of this formidable weapon.

as it proved afterwards, possessed a fierce and pertinacious bravery like that of the Jews; weapons of offence which would not have been contemptible anywhere in a previous age, but which were becoming so amongst Europeans in the sixteenth century;* a consolidated kingdom, of which the capital at any rate was devoted to its sovereign, and substantial edifices.†

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* On the other hand, their defensive armour was good, though not to be compared to that of the Spaniards.

† Lord Macaulay, in his "Essay on Lord Clive," says, that "the victories of Cortes had been gained over savages who had no letters, who were ignorant of the use of metals, who had not broken in a single animal to labour, who wielded no better weapons than those which could be made out of sticks, flints, and fish-bones, who regarded a horse-soldier as a monster, half man and half beast, who took an arquebusier for a sorcerer, able to scatter the thunder and lightning of the skies."

These weapons, however, could hardly have been as contemptible as they are thus represented, for we find that, at the first discharge of missiles in the first battle with Cortes, the Indians wounded seventy men, two of them fatally. Neither is it much to their discredit, that they did not break in animals to labour, as there were none for them to break in. Now that they possess horses, there are no people in the world more expert with them, as may be seen in the case of those who make use of the

The means which Cortes had at his command.

On his side Cortes had valiant captains, trained men-at-arms, a small park of artillery, these wonderful horses, and his own dissembling mind and vast audacity—cut off from all retreat. The difficulties, however, in his own camp, which his uncertain position created for him, were very great; and his enterprise, considered in all respects, was, perhaps, as difficult as any feat of arms the world has ever contemplated.

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lasso. Had the Mexicans possessed horses in those days, there would not have been the slightest chance for the Spaniards, unless they had come in large armies, in which case the difficulty of finding supplies would have been almost an insuperable obstacle.

CHAPTER III.

Cortes marches to Tlascala—Great battle with the Tlascalans—The Tlascalan senate allies itself to Cortes—Cortes enters Cholula—The Great Massacre there—First sight of Mexico—Cortes enters Mexico—Description of the City.

Cortes marches on towards Tlascala.

THE next step which Cortes took was to march towards the territory of Tlascala. His friends at Cempoala had informed him that the people of that territory were friends of theirs, and very especial enemies (*muy capitales enemigos*) of Montezuma. The Tlascalan form of government was republican, and Cortes compares it to those of Genoa, Venice, and Pisa.*

Form of the Tlascalan government.

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* "La órden que hasta ahora se ha alcanzado, que la gente de ella tiene en gobernarse, es casi como las Señorías de Venecia, y Génova, ó Pisa; porque no hay Señor general de todos."—LORENZANA, p. 59.

Before his approach, he sent four Cempoalans to the senate of Tlascala, telling the senate that he was coming through their country on his way to Mexico, that he had freed the Cempoalans from Montezuma's yoke, and that he wished to know what grievance the senate had against the Mexicans, that he might make the Tlascalan cause his own. Such, at least, was the substance of what Cortes wrote to the Tlascalans.

Message of Cortes.

The Tlascalan senate received this crafty message, or whatever part the ambassadors (who probably spoke on behalf of their own nation) chose to report of it, and proceeded to debate upon the subject. One great chief advised friendship with the Spaniards, as being a race more like gods than men, who would force their way even if the Tlascalans should oppose them. It would be wise, therefore, to accept their friendship, and to make alliance with them against the common enemy, Montezuma. These arguments he strengthened by appeals to omens and prophecies. Another senator said that the Spaniards were like some monstrous beasts cast upon the sea-shore. He lightly put aside the omens, on account of their

Debate in the Senate.

Magiscatzin's counsel.

Xicotencatl's counsel.

incertitude. He probably appealed to what the Spaniards had already done—mentioned their demands for gold; and, no doubt, if he were aware of it, described the indignities they had offered to the gods of the country,—undoubted deities in his eyes, whatever the new comers might be.*

The Tlascalans resolve on war.

His voice was for war: and such was the decision of the assembly,—as indeed might have been expected from the chiefs of a nation so jealous of interference that they had denied themselves the use of salt, because it came from Montezuma's country, and they were unwilling to have more intercourse with the Mexicans than they could help.

Notwithstanding the opposition to be expected from the Tlascalans, Cortes persevered in making his entrance into their country, and had to fight his way thither. After three or four severe engagements, in one of which, he tells us, he had to

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* I will not by any means be answerable for the exactitude of these speeches. There are more elaborate ones given in Torquemada, Herrera, and Clavigero,—all manifestly proceeding from one source, and tinged, I think, with a Spanish colour. I have no doubt, however, that great speeches were made on the occasion.

encounter one hundred and forty-nine thousand adversaries, "who covered the whole country,"* he at last succeeded in bringing the Tlascalans to terms. But this object was not attained before the Tlascalan General (Xicotencatl) had made great efforts, by craft as well as force, to overcome the Spaniards. It may a little diminish the surprise of the reader, at such extraordinary numbers being met and vanquished by the small army of Cortes, to find that they attacked in battalions of only 20,000 men.† An incident worth recording occurred when the Tlascalans sent certain spies to the camp of Cortes. These spies, forty in number, had a pretext for their coming, for they brought provisions to the camp, and certain victims (four miserable old women) for sacrifice. When the forty spies arrived, they began to sprinkle incense upon Cortes, and then they explained their embassage in the following words:

Cortes brings them to terms.

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* "Que cubrian toda la tierra."—LORENZANA, p. 52.

† "Heureusement pour Cortez, les Tlaxcaltèques ne les attaquèrent pas tous à la fois, mais par bataillons de vingt mille hommes qui se succédaient les uns aux autres à mesure qu'ils étaient repoussés."—IXTLILXOCHITL, *Hist. des Chichimèques*, chap. 83.

"Our Captain Xicotencatl sends you this present, which, if you are *teules*,* as those of Cempoala say, you will eat, and if you wish sacrifices, take these four women and sacrifice them, and you can eat of their flesh and their hearts. We have not hitherto sacrificed before you, as we did not know your manner of sacrifice. And if you are men, eat of these fowls and bread and fruit. If, however, you are benignant *teules*, we bring you incense and parrots' feathers; make your sacrifice with these things." Cortes replied, that it was not the custom of the Spaniards to put any one to death for sacrifice; and, besides, as long as the Tlascalans made war upon him, there were enough of them to slay. Afterwards, discovering that these messengers were spies, he most inhumanly, as I think, cut off the thumbs or hands of seventeen of them, and sent them back, thus maimed, to their Captain. At last messengers of peace did come from the Tlascalans; and their desire for alliance with Cortes must in no respect have been diminished by the arrival, about this

The Tlascalan spies bring food and a sacrifice.

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* Minor deities.—"Nos tenian por Teules, que son como sus idolos."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 72.

time, of ambassadors from Montezuma, who came bringing presents, and offering, as Cortes declares in his letter to Charles the Fifth, vassalage on the part of Montezuma to that Monarch.

The things most to be noted, in the march of Cortes from Cempoala to Tlascala, are the populousness and signs of civilization which he meets with, and his own vigorous sagacity. At one point of his march he comes upon a valley*

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* The valley of Yztacmastitán.

Populousness of a district through which Cortes passes.

where, for four successive leagues, there was a continuous line of houses; and the Lord of the valley lived in a fortress such as was not to be found in the half of Spain, surrounded by walls and barbacans and moats.* He also came upon

The great wall of Tlascala.

the great wall of Tlascala, which was nine feet high, and twenty feet broad, with a battlement a foot and a half in breadth. This wall was six miles long, and had an entrance constructed like a European ravelin of that day.†

Cortes not to be dismayed by omens.

The vigorous sagacity of Cortes was shown in his resolution to listen to no bad omen, con-

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* "El Señorío de este, serán tres, ó quatro leguas de poblacion, sin salir Casa de Casa, por lo llano del Valle, Ribera de un Rio pequeño, que vá por él: y en un Cerro muy alto está la Casa del Señor, con la mejor Fortaleza que hay en la mitad de España, y mejor cercada de Muro, y Barbacanas, y Cabas."—LORENZANA, p. 48.

† "É á la salida del dicho Valle, fallé una gran Cerca de piedra seca, tan alta como estado, y medio, que atravesaba todo el Valle de la una Sierra á la otra, y tan ancha como veinte piés: y por toda ella un Petril de pié, y medio de ancho, para pelear desde encima: y no mas de una entrada tan ancha como diez pasos, y en esta entrada doblaba la una Cerca sobre la otra á manera de Rebelin, tan estrecho como quarenta pasos."—LORENZANA, p. 49.

sidering, as he says, that God is above Nature*— in not being dismayed by the faint-heartedness of some of his companions, whom he overhears declaring that he is mad, and that they will return without him,— and in the ready craft with which he penetrates and defeats the plans of the Tlascalans, who thought to surprise him by a night attack.

The Tlascalans endeavoured to set Cortes against the Mexicans: the Mexican ambassadors did all they could to make him distrust the Tlascalans. It was a situation eminently suited to the genius of that crafty conqueror. He says, it gave him much pleasure to see their discord, for it seemed to further his design; he recollected the saying in the Scriptures, that "a kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation;" and was also fortified by the secular proverb, "From the wood comes the man who is to burn it."† "In secret," he adds, "I thanked

The diplomacy of Cortes.

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* "É aunque todos los de mi Compañía decían, que me tornasse, porque era mala señal, todavia seguí mi camino, considerando, que Dios es sobre natura."—LORENZANA, p. 54.

† "Del monte sale quien el monte quema."—OVIEDO, *Hist. Gen. y Nat.*, lib. xxxiii. cap. 4.

each party for the advice which they offered me, and gave each of them credit (*i. e.*, in words) for more friendship towards me than the other."*

Cortes enters Tlascala, Sept. 18.

Meanwhile, with the consent, and, indeed, upon the entreaty, of the Tlascalan chiefs, he had entered the town of Tlascala on the 18th of September, 1520. The word Tlascala signifies bread, or anything made of bread.† He was received with every demonstration of affection and regard by the Tlascalans. Their priests, as he entered the town, sprinkled incense upon him and his soldiers. As, however, they were repulsive-looking creatures, with matted hair,‡ from which dripped blood (their own blood, for they were in the habit of piercing their ears, their lips, and

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* "Aun acordéme de una autoridad Evangélica, que dice: *Omne Regnum in seipsum divisum desolabitur:* y con los unos, y con los otros maneaba, y á cada uno en secreto le agradecía el aviso, que me daba, y le daba crédito de mas amistad que al otro."—LORENZANA, p. 61.

† "Tlaxcallan, quiere decir Pan Coçido, ó cosa de Pan"—GOMARA, *Crónica*, cap. 55.

‡ "Los cabellos muy largos y enredados, que no se pueden desparcir, sino se cortan, y llenos de sangre, que les salian de las orejas, que en aquel dia se avian sacrificado."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 75.

their tongues with the thorns of the *maguey*,* their incensing must have been much more of a horror than a pleasure, and it must have been a great relief to have seen the hideous priests file off, and the Indian girls approach, bearing little pyramids of roses, which they offered to the principal captains. When the Tlascalans sought the Spanish General's friendship, they told him what struggles they had always made to maintain their independence. They had, however, fought him by night, and fought him by day, and had been compelled to confess their inferiority. When they had once confessed this to him, and had sought his friendship, it seems as if they had thoroughly thrown aside all enmity, and meant to abide by the friendly words they uttered.

Favourable reception of Cortes.

Their town was worthy of the intelligence of

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* "Era frequente, e d'ogni giorno, l'effusion di sangue in alcuni Sacerdoti, ed a questi davano il nome di *Tlamacazqui*. Pungevansi colle acutissime spine del maguei, e foravansi parecchie parti del corpo, massimamente l'orecchie, le labbra, la lingua, e la polpa delle gambe, e delle braccia."—CLAVIGERO, *Storia Antica del Messico*, tom. ii. lib. vi. p. 52.

its inhabitants. Cortes says that it was much larger and much stronger than Granada, and contained far more people* than that town at the time of the Moorish Conquest. There was a daily market, frequented by thirty thousand persons: which could boast, among its wares, of gold, silver, precious stones, earthenware equal to the best in Spain at that time, wood, charcoal, and medicines. As a proof of the civilization of the Tlascalans, we may notice that they had public baths. Their houses were built of bricks, sun-burnt and kiln-burnt, or of stone, according to the means of the builder. These houses were large, but not lofty, and had terraces upon the roofs. The Tlascalans had not arrived at that advanced stage in the art of building, which is indicated by the existence of doors; but they used matting instead, which was adorned with bells made of metal or sea-shells,† that gave due notice of entrance and exit.

The town and market of Tlascala.

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* It was afterwards ascertained that in the province of Tlascala there were 500,000 heads of families. —"Hay en esta Provincia por visitacion, que yo en ella mandé hacer, quinientos mil Vecinos."—LORENZANA, p. 60.

† "Las Casas de Terrado, ó de Açotea de Vigas, í tablaçon, hechas de Adoves, Ladrillo, í de Cal, í Canto,

The government was committed to four chiefs, who depended on the senate, and each of whom ruled a quarter of the city, which appears to have been strictly governed.

Almost the only transaction of Cortes at Tlascala of which we have a clear account, serves to illustrate his untiring zeal for religion. The Tlascalan chiefs thought they could not welcome these resplendent strangers better, or secure their friendship more certainly, than by presenting their daughters to them as wives. Upon this occasion, Cortes, whose religious zeal had already been restrained by Father de Olmedo, took the opportunity of explaining the Christian Faith to the Tlascalans, and endeavoured to make it a condition that if these Indian ladies were received as wives, the Tlascalans should quit their idolatry,

Cortes endeavours to convert the Tlascalans.

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como cada uno bodia: no usaban altos, sino paxos, í Salas mui grandes, de estraña hechura: tampoco Puertas, ni Ventanas, sino Esteras, hechas de Carriço, postiças, que se quitaban, í ponian, í colgados en ellas Cascaveles de Cobre, í de Oro, ó de otros Metales, í de Conchas Marinas, para que hiciesen ruido, quando se quitaban, ó abrian, í cerraban."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. II. lib. vi. cap. 12.

and worship the true God. The chiefs remonstrated against such a proceeding, and intimated that their people would die sooner than cease to sacrifice to their gods. Upon this, Father de Olmedo again interfered. He said that it would not be right to make them Christians by force. That what had been done in Cempoala, in throwing down the idols there, was against his judgment, and that such things were useless until the Indians should have some knowledge of the true Faith. "What was the good," he remarked, "of taking away the idols from one temple, when they would set up similar ones immediately in another?"* He relied upon a conversion which required more time and milder means. Such was the substance of what Father de Olmedo said, anticipating, perhaps, that Cortes would not hesitate to take extreme measures in carrying out a point which he had so much at heart. The advice of the good Father, much in advance of the temper of his time, and indeed of our time too, seems to have prevailed in this instance; and the work of conversion to Christianity was left to

The missionary zeal of Cortes restrained by Father de Olmedo.

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* See Bernal Diaz, cap. 76.

A discourse between Cortes and Magisca on religion.

the truly Christian methods of reasoning and persuasion. A conversation is given by a modern historian, which a certain Tlascalan lord, named Magisca, the one who in the senate had advocated peace with the Spaniards, held with Cortes on the subject of religion. He perceived, he said, that the Spaniards had something like a sacrifice, but yet there was no victim; and the Tlascalans "could not imagine how there was to be a sacrifice unless some one should die for the safety of the rest."* Then, again, though willing to admit that the God of the Spaniards was a very great God, greater than his own gods, he yet maintained that each god had power in his own country, and that many gods were necessary, one against tempests, another for harvests, a third for war.† In short, the Tlascalans were firm in their

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* "Ni sabian que pudiese haber Sacrificio sin que muriese alguno por la salud de los demás."—De Solis, *Conquista de la Nueva-España*, lib. iii. cap. 3. I do not know what authority De Solis had for this conversation; but the remarks of Magisca have some air of verisimilitude.

† The Tlascalans were much astonished to find that the Spaniards worshipped (so they interpreted it) a cross. "Il établit dans la grande salle du palais de Xicotencatl

idolatry. They were willing, however, to give way in a temporal matter which Cortes had very early proposed to them, namely, to become vassals of the King of Spain. But we may safely conclude, that they understood but little of what they undertook to do when they gave this promise of vassalage.

The Tlascalans become vassals of the King of Spain.

After staying twenty days in Tlascala, Cortes, accompanied by some thousands of his Tlascalan allies, proceeded on his way to Mexico. He had been much solicited by Montezuma's ambassadors to come to Cholula and await their master's response in that town. The Tlascalans, on the other hand, had warned him of some treacherous intent on the part of the Cholulans and of the Mexican ambassadors.

Cortes proceeds to Cholula.

Cortes, however, marched on Cholula, but met with a cold and uncertain reception there. It

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un oratoire avec une croix et une image de Notre-Dame, où l'on dit la messe presque tous les jours; il fit placer avec une grande solennité une autre croix dans la salle où il recevait le sénat. Les Tlaxcaltèques étaient très étonnés de voir que les Espagnols adoraient le Dieu qu'ils appelaient Tonacaquahuitl ou l'arbre de la nourriture."—IXTLILXOCHITL, *Histoire des Chichimèques*, chap. 84. TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages*.

was a grand town. Bernal Diaz thus describes it. "It had, at that time, above a hundred very

lofty towers, which were adoratories, where stood their idols; and I remember," he adds, "that, when we entered that city, and beheld such lofty towers glistening in the sun, it seemed like Valladolid." Cortes gives a still more favourable account of Cholula. "It is a more beautiful city from without than any in Spain, for it is many-towered and lies in a plain. And I certify to Your Highness that I counted from a mosque

His description of Cholula.

there four hundred other mosques, and as many towers, and all of them towers of mosques. It is the city most fit for Spaniards to live in of any that I have seen here, for it has some untilled ground (meads) and water, so that cattle might be bred, a thing which no other of the cities that we have seen possesses; for such is the multitude of people who dwell in these parts that there is not a hand-breadth of ground which is not cultivated."* Here Cortes found other messengers from Montezuma, but these did not come apparently with any message to Cortes, but to prepare an ambuscade by which twenty thousand Mexican troops were to fall upon the Spaniards in the streets of Cholula. This scheme was betrayed to Donna Marina by a Cholulan woman; the Tlascalans had also suspected it, and Bernal Diaz says that he remarked that the Cholulans withdrew from them with a mysterious kind of sneer on their faces. Cortes seized on two or three of the Cholulans, who confessed the plot, laying the blame on Montezuma. Calling his

Mexican ambuscade.

Treachery of the Cholulans.

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* "Es tanta la multitud de la Gente, que en estas Partes mora, que ni un palmo de Tierra hay, queno esté labrada."—LORENZANA, p. 67.

men together, Cortes informed them of the danger, and of his intention to punish the Cholulans. To the townspeople he pretended that he was about to set off the next morning, for which purpose he required food, attendants for the baggage, and two thousand men of war. These they agreed to furnish him. On the next morning he mounted his horse, summoned the Cholulan caciques round him, informed them that he had discovered their treachery, and then commenced an attack upon them. He had placed a guard in the outer court of the building where he was lodged, to prevent escape. A musket was fired as a signal; and then the Spanish soldiers set upon the unfortunate Cholulans in a way, which, as Bernal Diaz says, they would for ever remember, "for we slew many of them, and others were burnt alive; so little did the promises of their false gods avail them."*

Massacre of the Cholulans.

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* Las Casas, in a work, the only one of his which has been much circulated in the world, gives an unfair account of the massacre of Cholula, entirely ignoring the treachery of the Cholulans, which, or rather the belief in which, was the sole cause of the massacre; whereas he makes the motive of Cortes to have been a

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Cortes had the Cholulans now completely at his mercy: he appointed a new Cacique, the former one having been slain in the massacre; addressed the priests and chiefs on the subject of religion; destroyed the cages full of men and boys fattening for sacrifice; and, but for Father de Olmedo's remonstrances, he would have pulled down and broken to pieces the idols, but he contented himself with erecting an altar and a cross.

Cortes marches on to Mexico.

Meanwhile, the twenty thousand Mexicans returned to Mexico, bringing the unwelcome news to their Monarch of the failure of the enterprise: and Cortes, quitting Cholula, marched on with much circumspection, "the beard always on the shoulder,"* towards the capital.

First view of the great valley of Mexico.

It was when they had advanced about eight leagues from Cholula, in the gorge between two lofty mountains, that Cortes and his little army,

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wish to spread terror. "Acordaron los Españoles de hazer alli una matança, ó castigo (como ellos dizen) para poner, y sembrar su temor, é braveza en todos los rincones de aquellas tierras."—*Brevissima Relacion de la destruycion de las Indias*, p. 17. Sevilla, año. 1552.

* "Andavamos la barba sobre el ombro."—Bernal Diaz, cap. 86.

looking northwards, first saw before them the great valley of Mexico, with the lakes, the central city, and the smaller tributary towns in the neighbourhood. Historians have made much of this first view of Mexico, forgetting how little thought a busied captain and a band of fortune-seeking adventurers have to bestow upon what is picturesque and beautiful. Besides, it is the parting, and not the coming glance, which discovers the full beauty of any scene in nature; or, at least, makes men inclined to linger upon it. But Cortes was hurrying on to conquest, with a mind occupied by fanaticism, ambition, and that which is dearer than all to men who aspire to command, namely, a wish to be right in what they have once determined upon. He, therefore, tells with a coolness, which forms a ludicrous contrast to the glowing descriptions of historians, of his first beholding the territory of Montezuma.*

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* "Otro dia siguiente subí al Puerto por entre las dos Sierras, que hé dicho, y á la bajada de él, ya que la tierra de el dicho Muteczuma descubríamos por una Provincia de ella, que se dice Chalco."—*Carta de Relacion de* D. Fernando Cortes. Lorenzana, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, p. 72.

Thoughts of the common soldiers on first seeing Mexico.

The common soldiers are represented to have been divided in their opinions upon what they beheld. The more resolute amongst them, looking down upon the wondrous cities of that vast plain, thought of the booty it contained, and recollected a well-known proverb, "The more Moors, the more spoil."* Those who were inclined to prudence, considering the populousness of which they beheld so many signs, thought it was a temptation of Providence for such a handful of men to enter so mighty a kingdom.

Montezuma's messengers fail to stay Cortes.

At the place where Cortes rested after his descent, he found messengers from Montezuma, who sought to dissuade him, by the pretended difficulties of the way, from entering further into the great King's territories. They also offered bribes.† The resolute Cortes replied with courtesy; alleged his duty to the King of Spain to proceed; and passed on.

There is a tale, which comes from Mexican sources, that Montezuma bethought him now of

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* "Mas Moros, mas ganancia."

† "Concertarian de me dar en cado año, *certum quid.*"— LORENZANA, p. 73.

staying the advance of the Spaniards by means of his wizards and his necromancers. He sent a number of them forth, that by their incantations and their wizardries they might enchant his enemies to their destruction. It may readily be conjectured that these wise men were too careful of their lives to adventure within the Spanish camp; but the story they told was, that they met a man in the way, "he seemed like an Indian of Chalco; he seemed like one that is drunk;" and that this man threatened and scorned them. "What does Montezuma intend to do?" he exclaimed. "Is it now that he is bethinking himself of awakening; is it now that he is beginning to fear? But already there is no remedy for him; for he has caused many deaths unjustly. He has committed many injuries, treacheries, and follies." Then the soothsayers and enchanters were much afraid, and made a mound of earth as an altar for this man. But he would not sit upon it; and his wrath was only greater, and he spake again, saying, "He would never more make account of Mexico, nor have charge of that people, nor assist them. And when the soothsayers would have

Montezuma's necromancers.

answered him, they could not do so (*lit.*, there was a knot in their throats)."*

Having uttered these things, and other threats pointing to the destruction of Mexico, the seeming Chalcan vanished from their sight. Then the soothsayers perceived that they had been talking with the god Tezcatlipuk; and they returned to Montezuma, and related all that had happened to them. And when he heard it, the King was very sad and crest-fallen (*cabizbajo*), and for a time said not a word. At last, he broke out into lamentations over Mexico, deploring the fate of their old men and their old women, of their youths and of their maidens, concluding a doleful discourse by words which contain the philosophy of despair:—"We are born: let that come which must come."† And thus these soothsayers and necromancers, who had no doubt been an oppressive institution upon the Mexican kingdom, were of no avail in time of danger, unless to utter unpleasant and reproachful things, which utterances are nearly sure to be made in the days of adver-

The necromancers bring back bad tidings.

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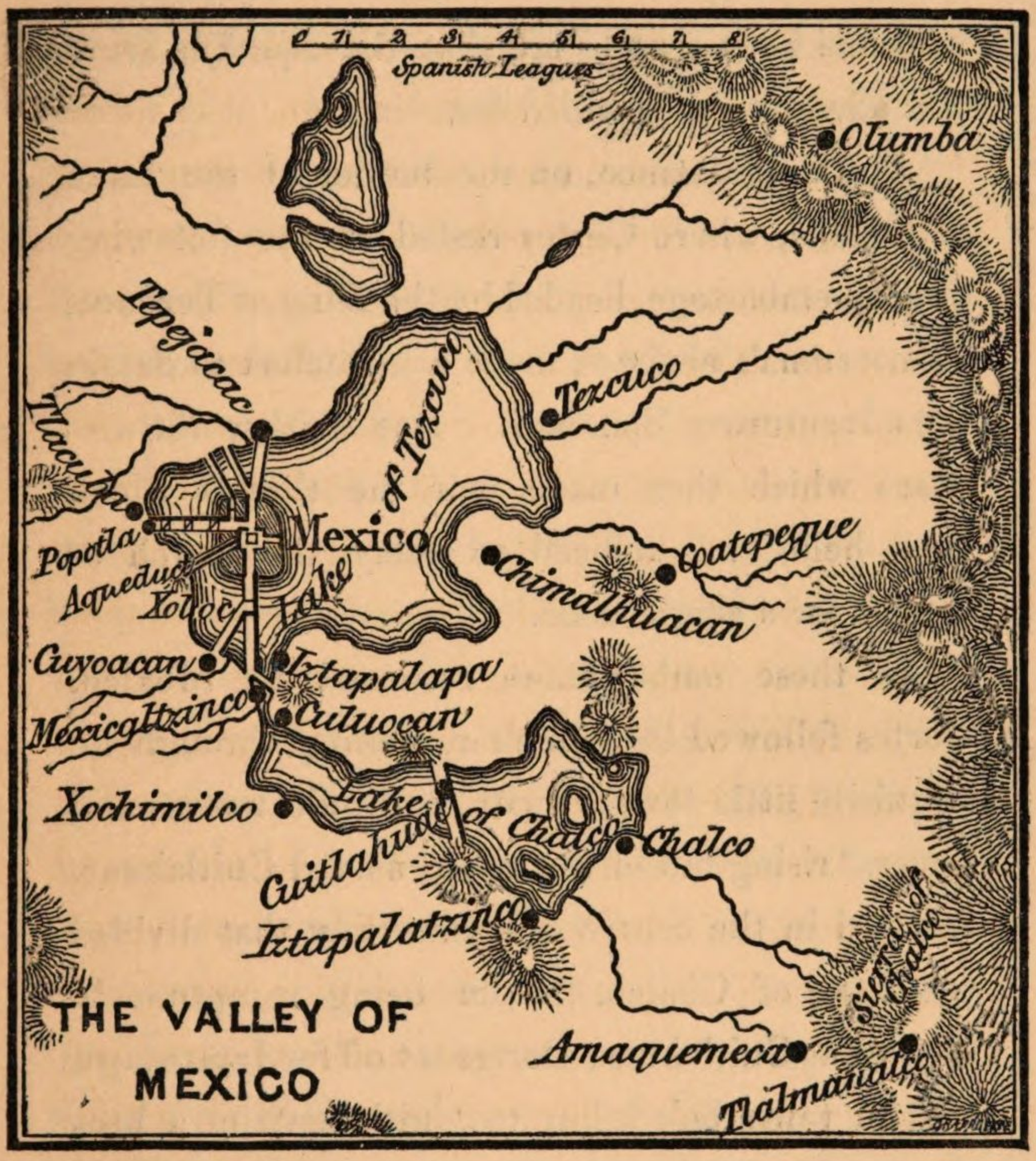
* "Hizoseles un nudo en la garganta."

† "Nacidos somos: venga lo que viniere."

sity, without the aid of soothsaying or necromancy.*



* This story is to be found, more fully narrated, in the "Historia Universal de las cosas de Nueva-España" of Bernardino de Sahagun, lib. xii. cap. 13, Kingsborough's Collection.

The march of Cortes.

The next place that Cortes reached was Amaquemeca; and staying there for the night, he was well received, and found officers of Montezuma, who had been sent to see that the Spanish army was adequately provided for.

Cortes at Iztapalatzinco.

At Iztapalatzinco, on the border of the Lake of Chalco, where Cortes rested on the following day, an embassage, headed by the King of Tezcuco, Montezuma's nephew, made a last effort to detain the adventurous Spaniard. But neither the excuses which they made, nor the threats which they held out, sufficed to delay the march of Cortes for a single hour.

At Cuitlahuac.

As these ambassadors returned to Mexico, Cortes followed in their rear, passing through an exquisite little town, "with well-built houses and towers" rising out of the water, named Cuitlahuac, situated in the centre of a causeway that divided the Lake of Chalco. After being sumptuously regaled at Cuitlahuac, Cortes set off for Iztapalapa, a little town belonging to Cuitlahuatzin, a brother of Montezuma.* It was in this day's jour-

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* Iztapalapa is derived from *Yxtatl*, the Mexican word for salt. "Yxtapalapa, que quiere decir Pueblos donde

ney, and when they had reached the broad causeway that forms the beginning of the highway from that town to Mexico, that the full beauty of the city and its magnificent environs burst upon their sight. I have said before, that a troop of men hastening to make their fortunes, are not in the humour to be entranced by natural scenery. But here was a scene at which the most disciplined soldier would not wait for the word of command to halt, but would stop short of his own accord, as if he had suddenly come into some realm of enchantment. Bernal Diaz exclaims, "And when we saw from thence so many cities and towns rising up from the water, and other populous places situated on the terra-firma, and that causeway, straight as a carpenter's level, which went into Mexico, we remained astonished, and said to one another that it appeared like the enchanted castles which they tell of in the book of Amadis, by reason of the great towers, temples, and edifices which there were in the water, and all of them work of masonry. Some, even, of our soldiers asked, if

The first near sight of Mexico.

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se coge Sal, ó Yxtatl; y aun hoy tienen este mismo oficio los de Yxtapalapa."—LORENZANA, p. 56, note.

this that they saw was not a thing in a dream."* The beauty of the sight seems to have had an exhilarating effect, for there is not a word said of the danger which these enchanted towers and palaces might portend. Their General, however, had been very wary throughout his route from Cholula, and an historian remarks of his conduct during this journey, that his vigilance was always beyond his thoughts,† by which is meant that his caution in action exceeded even his apprehensiveness in thought.

Cortes at Iztapalapa.

At Iztapalapa Cortes rested for a night, previously to entering Mexico. In recounting any other journey, the traveller, or even the historian, would pause to relate the beauties and the delights of Iztapalapa. The common soldier, Bernal Diaz, says that he was never tired of beholding the diversity of trees, the raised terraces, the flower-gardens traversed by large canoes, and adorned with beautiful frescoes.‡

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* Bernal Diaz, cap. 87.

† "Mas cómo yban sobre aviso, y el general era tan aperçebido que siempre se hallaba adelante de sus pensamientos."—Oviedo, *Hist. Gen. y Nat.*, lib. xxxiii. cap. 5.

‡ "No me hartava de mirallo, y ver la diversidad de

The next day Cortes entered Mexico.

Cortes enters Mexico. Nov. 8, 1519.

Who shall describe Mexico—the Mexico of that age? It ought to be one who had seen all the wonders of the world; and he should have for an audience those who had dwelt in Venice and Constantinople, who had looked down upon Granada from the Alhambra, and who had studied all that remains to be seen, or known, of the hundred-gated Thebes, of Babylon, and of Nineveh.

The especial attributes of the most beautiful cities in the world were here conjoined; and that which was the sole boast of many a world-renowned name, formed but one of the charms of this enchantress among cities. Well might the rude Spanish soldier find no parallel but in the imaginations of his favourite Romance.* Like Granada, encircled, but not frowned upon, by

Description of Mexico.

árboles, y los olores que cada uno tenia, y andenes llenos de rosas y flores, y muchos frutales, y rosales de la tierra, y un estanque de agua dulce: y otra cosa de ver, que podrian entrar, en el vergel grandes canoas desde la laguna, por una abertura que tenia hecha sin saltar en tierra, y todo mui encalado, y luzido de muchas maneras de piedras y pinturas en ellas."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 87.

* "Amadis de Gaul."

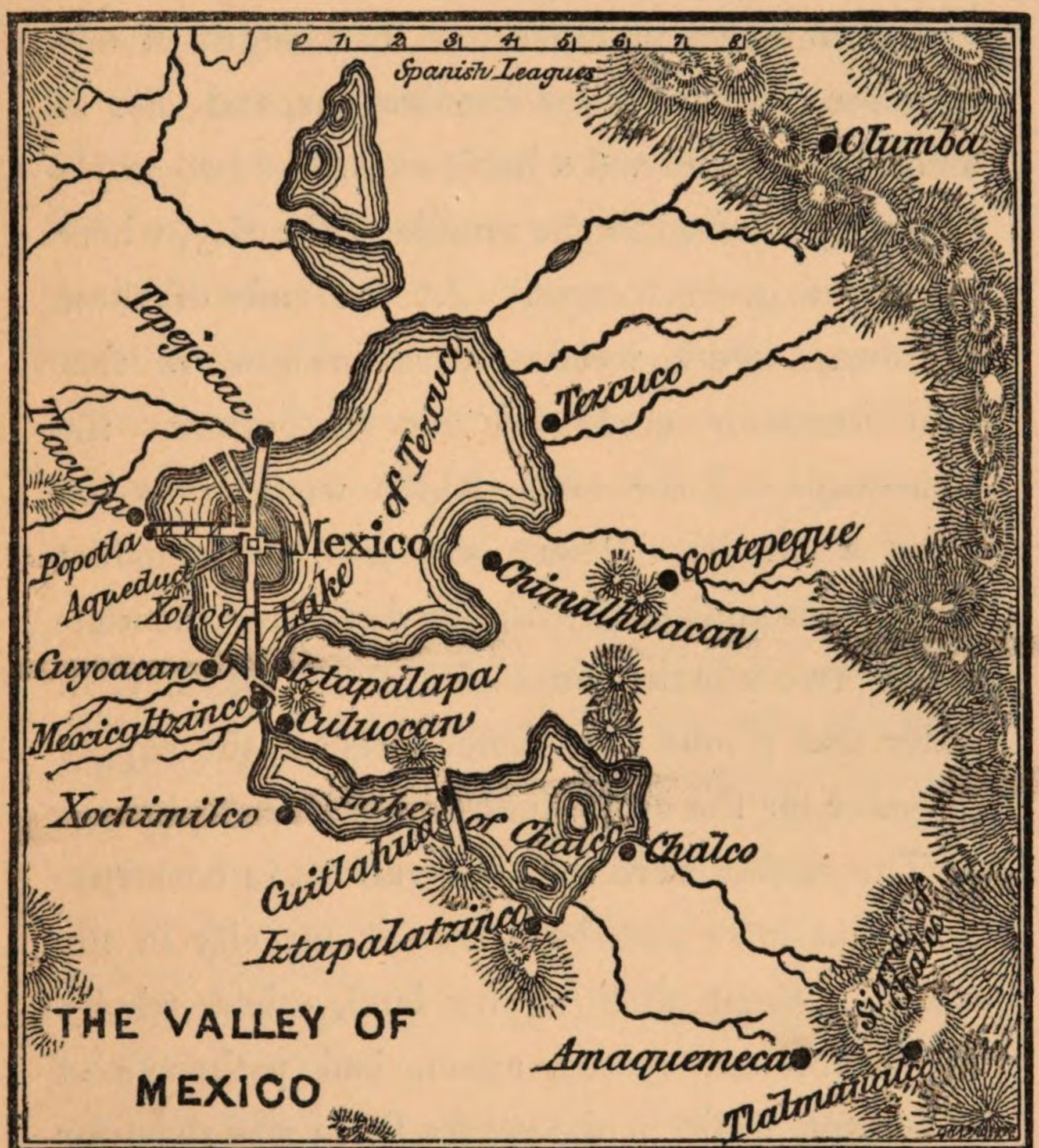
mountains; fondled and adorned by water, like Venice; as grand in its buildings as Babylon of old; and rich with gardens, like Damascus;—the great city of Mexico was at that time the fairest in the world, and has never since been equalled. Like some rare woman, of choicest parentage, the descendant of two royal houses far apart, who joins the soft, subtle, graceful beauty of the South, to the fair, blue-eyed, blushing beauty of the North, and sits enthroned in the hearts of all beholders,—so sat Mexico upon the waters, with a diadem of gleaming towers, a fair expanse of flowery meadows on her breast, a circle of mountains as her zone: and, not unwomanlike, rejoicing in the reflection of her beautiful self from the innumerable mirrors which were framed by her streets, her courts, her palaces, and her temples.

Mexico very beautiful, even when seen closely.

Neither was hers a beauty, like that of many cities, which gratifies the eye at a distance; but which diminishes at each advancing step of the beholder, until it absolutely degenerates into squalidity. She was beautiful when seen from afar; she still maintained her beauty, when narrowly examined by the impartial and scrupulous traveller. She was the city not only of a

great king, but of an industrious and thriving people.

If we descend into details, we shall see that



the above description is not fanciful nor exaggerated. Mexico was situated in a great salt lake,

communicating with a fresh-water lake. It was approached by three principal causeways of great breadth, constructed of solid masonry, which, to use the picturesque language of the Spaniards, were two lances in breadth. The length of one of these causeways was two leagues, and that of another, a league and a half; and these two ample causeways united in the middle of the city, where stood the great temple. At the ends of these causeways were wooden draw-bridges, so that communication could be cut off between the causeways and the town, which would thus become a citadel. There was also an aqueduct which communicated with the main land, consisting of two separate lines of work in masonry, in order that if one should need repair, the supply of water for the city might not be interrupted.

The aqueduct.

Construction of the streets.

The streets were the most various in construction that have ever been seen in any city in the world. Some were of dry land, others wholly of water; and others, again, had pathways of pavement, while in the centre there was room for boats.* The foot-passengers could talk with

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* "Les autres étaient à moitié garnies d'une terre

those in the boats.* It may be noticed that a city so constructed requires a circumspect and polite population.

Palaces are common-place things to describe; but the abodes of the Mexican kings were not like the petty palaces of Northern princes. One of the most observant of those Spaniards, who first saw these wonders, speaks of a palace of Montezuma's in which there was a room where three thousand persons could be well accommodated, and on the terrace-like roof of which a splendid tournament might have been given.† Monte-zuma's palace.

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argileuse, battue, qui faisait l'effet d'un pavé en brique; l'autre moitié était remplie d'eau; les habitants peuvent circuler sur la terre ou bien sur l'eau dans leurs barques." —*Relation sur la Nouvelle-Espagne*, chap. 17. TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages.* (*Relatione d'alcune cose della Nuova Spagna e della gran città di Temistitan Messicò.* Fatta per un gentil'huomo del Signor Fernando Cortese. RAMUSIO, tom. iii.)

* The boats that plied in and about Mexico were estimated at fifty thousand in number.

† "On voyait dans une de ces résidences un salon assez vaste pour que trois mille personnes pussent y tenir sans être gênées. Ce palais était si vaste, que sur la terrasse qui le couvrait on aurait pu donner un tournois où trente cavaliers se seraient exercés aussi

The market-place.

There was a market-place twice as large as that of the city of Salamanca, surrounded with porticos in which there was room for fifty thousand people to buy and sell.

The great temple.

The great temple of the city maintained its due proportion of magnificence. In the plan of the city of Mexico, which is to be found in a very early edition of the Letters of Cortes, published at Nuremberg,* and which is supposed to be the one that Cortes sent to Charles the Fifth, I observe that the space allotted to the temple is twenty times as great as that allotted to the market-place. Indeed, the sacred enclosure was in itself a town; and Cortes, who seldom stops in his terrible narrative to indulge in praise or in needless description, says that no human tongue could explain the grandeur and the peculiarities

The enclosure of the great temple.

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facilement que sur la grande place d'une ville."—*Relation sur la Nouvelle-Espagne*, chap. 20. TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages.*

* See Stevens's "American Bibliographer," under the head of "Cortes." A facsimile of the plan is inserted in that valuable work, from which the one given in this book is taken. It has also been compared with the original in the British Museum.

of this temple.* Cortes uses the word "temple," but it might rather be called a sacred city, as it contained many temples, and the abodes of all the priests and virgins who ministered at them, also a university, and an arsenal. It was enclosed by lofty stone walls, and was entered by four portals, surmounted by bastions. No less than twenty† truncated pyramids of solid masonry, faced with a polished surface of white cement that shone like silver in the sun, rose up from within that enclosure. High over them all towered the great temple dedicated to the god of war. This, like the rest, was a truncated pyramid, with ledges round it, and with two small towers upon the summit, in which were placed the images of the great god of war (Huitzilopochtli) and of the principal deity of all (Tezcatlipuk), the Mexican Jupiter. It is sad to own that an en-

A sacred city.

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* "Entre estas Mezquitas hay una, que es la principal, que no hay lengua humana, que sepa explicar la grandeza, y particularidades de ella: porque es tan grande, que dentro del circuito de ella, que es todo cercado de Muro muy alto, se podia muy bien facer una Villa de quinientos Vecinos."—LORENZANA, p. 105.

† Cortes says forty; but I prefer abiding by the words of "the Anonymous Conqueror."

trance into these fair-seeming buildings would have gone far to dissipate the admiration which a traveller—if we may imagine one preceding Cortes—would, up to this moment, have felt for Mexico. The temples and palaces, the polished, glistening towers, the aviaries, the terraces, the gardens on the house-tops (many-coloured, for they were not like those at Damascus, where only the rose and the jasmine are to be seen); in a word, the bright, lively and lovely city would have been forgotten in the vast disgust that would have filled the mind of the beholder,

The temple foul within.

when he saw the foul, blood-besmeared idols, with the palpitating hearts of that day's victims lying before them, and the black-clothed, filthy, unkempt priests ministering to these hideous compositions of paste* and human blood. "Let the stern Cortes enter," is the cry which the amazed spectator would have uttered, when he

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* "Elles étaient composées de la réunion de toutes les plantes dont ils se nourrissent, ils les enduisaient de sang de cœur humain ('Le impastavano con sangue di cuori d'huomini.'—RAMUSIO); voilà de quelle matière leurs dieux étaient faits."—*Relation sur la Nouvelle-Espagne*, chap. 12. TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages*.

saw these horrors, and thought of the armed men who were coming to destroy them. And yet this conjunction, which was to be met with at Mexico, of beauty and horror, is no new thing, and something very like it may be discovered in other guise throughout the world! Civilization side by side with utter barbarism! Such is the contrast to be found in the present age too; and such, perhaps, in each of ourselves. And so, with some feeling of pity, even for a nation of cruel and bloodthirsty idolaters, we may contemplate the arrival of the Avenger as he makes his entry into Mexico.

If any one should think that the foregoing apology for the Mexican barbarities is overstrained, let him imagine, for a moment, that Christianity had arisen in the New instead of the Old World; that some Peruvian Columbus had led the way, from West to East, across the Atlantic; and that American missionaries had come to Rome, in the first century of the Christian era. Honoured by the Emperor as ambassadors from some "barbarian" power, and taken in his suite to the Coliseum, with what intense disgust and consternation would these pious men have regarded

Worse savages in the Coliseum at Rome than in the great temple of Mexico.

all that they saw there. They would have seen men torn in pieces by wild beasts, not for anything so respectable as superstition, but simply to minister to that most vile and morbid of pleasurable excitements which is to be derived from witnessing (ourselves in safety) the struggles and the agonies of others. "These spectators are indeed savages," they would have exclaimed: "and behold, there are women, too, amongst them! No longer beautiful, in our eyes, are the golden palaces, the marble colonnades, and the countless images, admirably sculptured, which we find amongst these barbarous Roman people. Let us hasten to convert them."

But the Old World has always been proud of its Rome, and has spoken of its Romans as the masters of civilization.

CHAPTER IV.

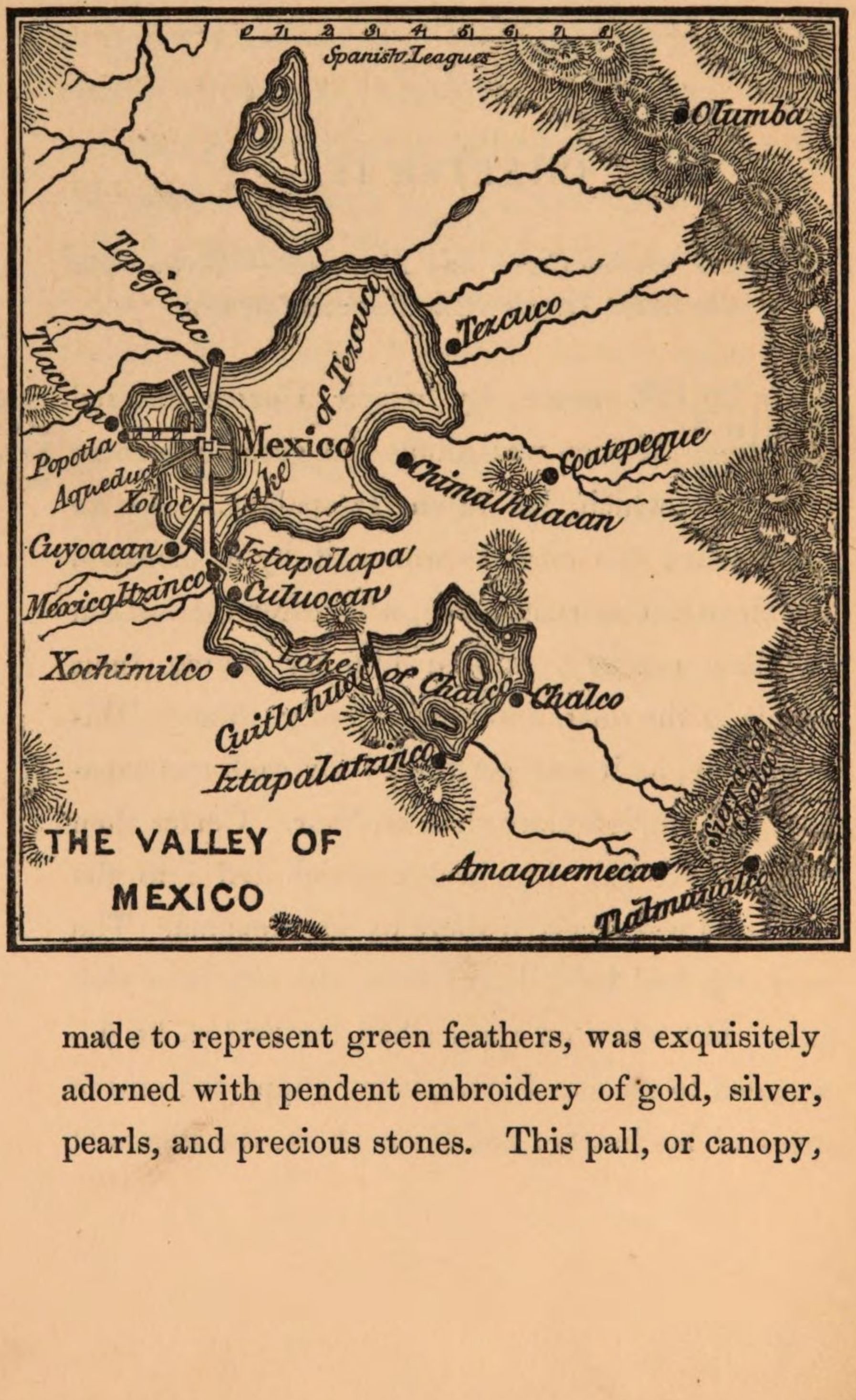
Interviews between Cortes and Montezuma—Cortes visits the Great Temple—The Mexican Idolatry.

Reception of Cortes by Montezuma.

THE route by which Cortes entered Mexico was along the great causeway which led from Iztapalapa. As he approached the city, he was met by a thousand Mexican nobles richly clad, who, after the fashion of their country, saluted him by laying their hands in the dust, and then kissing them. This ceremony, as it was performed by each one separately, occupied more than an hour. Cortes then passed over the drawbridge which led into the city, and was received there by Montezuma. The monarch had been borne from the city in a rich litter, but when he approached the bridge, he descended to receive Cortes, being supported on the arms of his brother and his nephew, the Kings of

Monte-zuma's dress.

Tezcuco and Iztapalapa. A gorgeous pall, of which the ground-work was either green feathers, or



made to represent green feathers, was exquisitely adorned with pendent embroidery of gold, silver, pearls, and precious stones. This pall, or canopy,

was held over him by four great lords. He wore a mantle rich with gold and precious stones; on his head a mitred diadem of gold, and on his feet golden sandals,* richly embossed, "after the manner of the ancients." The subordinate Kings were bare-footed, though dressed in other respects as magnificently as Montezuma. The Spanish General descended from his horse and would have embraced the Mexican Monarch. But this gesture did not accord with the notions of reverence entertained by the Mexicans for their kings; and Cortes was prevented from executing this friendly but familiar intention of his. They interchanged presents, however, Cortes throwing upon Montezuma's neck a collar made (somewhat significantly) of false pearls and diamonds; while Montezuma, as they went further on, gave the Spanish General two collars made of shells which the Mexicans valued much, each collar being adorned with eight golden pendants in the form of craw-fish, admirably wrought. The pro-

Cortes and Montezuma exchange presents.

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* "Traìa unos Çapatos de Oro, i Piedras engastadas, que solamente eran las Suelas prendidas con Correas, como se pintan à lo antiguo."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 65. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. ii.

cession then moved on with all due pomp into the town, for the stately Spaniard was the man of the Old World who understood pomp nearly as well as any of these despots of the New World. The eyes of the beholders, familiar with the aspect of gold and jewels, were doubtless fixed upon the wondrous animals that came foaming and caracolling along. Behind them all rode Death, but no one saw him.

Mexico, being such a city as I have described, was pre-eminently adapted for the display of a great concourse of human beings. By land and by water, on the towers, on the temples, at all heights of those truncated pyramids, were clustered human beings to gaze upon the strangers. The crowds that came to see the Spaniards made the spectacle very grand, but did not add to their sense of security. Indeed, as they marched along this narrow causeway, intersected by various bridges, of which they well knew the use that might be made in war, they must have felt, as one of them owns he did feel, considerable apprehension. The wary counsel that had been given to them by the Tlascalans and the other

Apprehensions of the Spaniards.

enemies of Montezuma, was sure on this occasion to be present to the minds of some of them; but, no doubt, they all marched on with soldierly composure to the quarters which Montezuma had prepared for them. These were in the palace of his father, a previous sovereign of Mexico. Having conducted the Spaniards thither, he left them to refresh themselves after the fatigues of their journey.

The memorable day on which Cortes and his companions entered Mexico was the 8th of November, 1519. Their number was about four hundred and fifty. In a time of extraordinary festivity, they would have formed but a poor and mean sacrifice to have been offered to the Mexican gods. On the other hand the very least number at which the population of Mexico can be estimated is three hundred thousand, and I conceive it to have been much larger.* Population of Mexico.

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* "Torquemada affirms, that the population of the capital amounted to one hundred and twenty thousand houses; but the Anonymous Conqueror, Gomara, Herrera, and other historians, agree in the number of sixty thousand houses, not that of sixty thousand inhabitants, as Robertson says; for no ancient author computed them

The course of history amongst people, who have the same general ideas, the same religion, and who are not far removed from each other in civilization, is apt to be somewhat monotonous, and sadly to perplex the memories of children and other unfortunate persons, who have to give an account of what they read. But when the men

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so few in number. It is true that in the Italian translation of the relation of the Anonymous Conqueror we read *sessante mila abitanti;* but this has been, without doubt, a mistake of the translator, who having, perhaps, found in the original *sesenta mil vecinos*, translated it sixty thousand *abitanti*, when he ought to have said *fuochi;* because, otherwise, Cholula, Xochimilco, Iztapalapa, and other such cities would be made greater than Mexico. But in the above mentioned number the suburbs are not included. It appears that Torquemada included the suburbs, but still his calculation appears excessive."—CLAVIGERO, *History of Mexico*, English translation, book ix. p. 72—note.

This error of reckoning the heads of families as the whole population requires to be much guarded against in early American history. Even M. Humboldt is said to have fallen into it. See *Antigüedades Peruanas*, p. 65. It is certain that *vecinos* does not in this instance mean individual neighbours, but the heads of neighbouring families. We often use the word "neighbour" in the same sense.

of one hemisphere meet the men of another, after having been separated for unknown centuries, the simplest affair between them is in the highest degree curious; and the difficulties of the narrative, the strangeness of the names (which, however, might not be so inharmonious if we knew how to pronounce them), and whatever else may be repulsive in the story, are all overcome by the originality of the transactions. In this case, Cortes, who may very fitly represent the European commander of that age, both in his valour, his policy, and his devoutness, meets the greatest monarch of the state most advanced in civilization of the Western world; and, if we could but trust to interpreters, what an insight we should have into the history of this strange and eventful conquest.

Renewal of intercourse between the men of the New and of the Old World.

But alas! those who know how difficult a thing it is to render one European language into another, may well feel bewildered, when they have to give an account of what passed through the mouths of interpreters in languages where frequently there were no cognate ideas. Moreover, supposing the respective translations freed from mere difficulties of language, they still were

Much left to conjecture in interpreted discourse.

likely to be varied largely by the passions and the interests of the bystanders, and then to be coloured according to the personages for whom the reports of these conversations were prepared. It is necessary to bear all these difficulties in mind when considering the transactions which are now to be narrated, and the evidence upon which they rest.

Conference between Cortes and Montezuma.

After the Spaniards had dined in the palace set apart for them, Montezuma returned, and had a formal conference with Cortes. The account which the Spanish Commander gives to his Sovereign of this conference is, that Montezuma commenced by saying, that he and his subjects were descended from strangers who had come from afar into this country.* He added that their leader had returned to his own country, and that when he came again to seek his people, they declined to accompany him back, and that finally he returned alone. The Mexican nation, however,

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* Observe, from Peter Martyr's account of the speech, how a statement of this kind grows.—"Ad oras magnus quidam princeps post omnium viventium memoriam, *classe vectus*, majores nostros, perduxit."—Dec. v. cap. 3.

had always supposed that the descendants of this great leader would come again, and subdue the earth; that it was probable that the great personage of whom Cortes had spoken* (Charles the Fifth) was a descendant of the first leader of the Mexicans to that country, and, consequently, their natural Lord; that he, therefore, and his people held Cortes for Lord in the place of his master, and placed all that they had at his disposal.

Improbability of part of the speech as reported.

So far the report of the speech of Montezuma seems likely to be false, or, at least, greatly overstrained. Montezuma may have sought to claim kindred with these wondrous and valorous strangers. He may have alluded to prophecies about their coming—and the concurrence of testimony on this point is very remarkable. But that he placed himself and his kingdom in this unreserved manner, in open court, as it were, at the feet of Cortes in their first interview, is in the highest degree unlikely; and we cannot but regret to find the authority for this conversation, not only in the history subsequently drawn up by the Chap-

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* Not on the present occasion, but before, to Montezuma's ambassadors.

lain of Cortes, but in the letter of Cortes himself to the Emperor. What follows is probable and credible. Montezuma went on to say that he well knew that Cortes had heard from the Tlascalans and others many calumnies about him, also many exaggerations, such as that the walls of his palaces were made of gold, and that he was a god; "whereas you see," he said, "my palaces are made of stone, lime, and earth, and my flesh is like yours." He then assured them that they should be provided with all necessary things, and be under no care, just as if they were still in their own country and their own homes.

Cortes visits Montezuma.

The next day Cortes paid a visit to Montezuma. This time the conversation was not political but religious; and Cortes, insincere, crafty, and reserved, in mundane matters, seems to have compensated for all this, and to have indulged in a sincerity which bordered on rashness, in all that concerned spiritual matters. It may be doubted whether, in the annals of conquest, any conqueror can be found (except perhaps some Mohamedan one) who was more deeply imbued with the missionary spirit than was Cortes.

The Spanish Commander, already not unprac-

tised in expounding the mysteries of the Christian Faith, repeated briefly the story of Christianity; explained to Montezuma why the Spaniards worshipped the cross; condemned and scorned the Mexican idols; and informed Montezuma how these idols had given way before the cross.*

Cortes as a preacher.

From the New Testament Cortes passed to the Old Testament, spoke of the Creation, of Adam and Eve, of the universal brotherhood of man, and then said that his King, in the spirit of such brotherhood, grieving over the loss of souls, had sent the Spaniards to prevent the adoration of idols and the sacrifice of men and women. He then held out a hope that certain persons, who were of a much more saintly character than he and his men, would hereafter be sent by the King of Spain to instruct the Mexicans in these sacred things.

Montezuma now indicating a wish to speak, Cortes concluded his discourse, doubtless putting

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* "Que mirassen quan malos son, y de poca valia, que adonde tenemos puestas Cruzes, como las que vieron sus Embaxadores, con temor dellas no osan parecer delante."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 90.

a restraint upon himself for so eloquent a preacher.

It brings the whole scene more vividly before us, and shows, I think, that at least we are right in concluding Religion to have been the chief, if not the only subject discussed at this interview, that Cortes turned to his men and said, "We will finish with this, as it is the first touch."*

Monte-zuma's reply to Cortes.

"My Lord Malinché!"† replied Montezuma, "I have had a perfect understanding of all the discourse and reasonings which you have addressed before now to my vassals upon the subject of your God; and also upon that of the cross; and also respecting all the other matters that you have spoken about in the *pueblos* through which you have passed. We have not responded to any of these things, for from the beginning here we have adored our gods and have held them to be good gods; and so, no doubt, are yours: do not take

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* "E díxonos Cortés á todos nosotros, que con el fuimos; con esto cumplimos, por ser el primer toque.—Bernal Diaz, cap. 90.

† Malinche, from *Malintzin*, the Lord of Marina; *tzin* being a Mexican title, added to names, and corresponding to the word "Lord."

the trouble, at present, to say anything more about them to us. And, with respect to what you say about the Creation of the World, we, too, are of opinion that it was created a long time ago, and we hold it for certain that you are the persons of whom our ancestors spoke to us, who would come from where the sun rises; and to that great king of yours I am much obliged; and I will give him of that which I may have." *

The above is part of a speech recorded by Bernal Diaz, and may be taken as an unbiased account of what that honest soldier, who was present, gathered of the meaning of what passed in this memorable interview. It will be observed how inconsistent it is with the report given by

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* "No os hemos respondido á cosa ninguna dellas; porque desde abinicio acá adoramos nuestros Dioses, y los tenemos por buenos: é assí deuen ser los vuestros; é no cureis mas al presente de nos hablar dellos; y en esso de la creacion del mundo, assí lo tenemos nosotros creido muchos tiempos passados: é á esta causa tenemos por cierto, que sois los que nuestros antecessores nos dixeron que vernian de adonde sale el Sol é á esse vuestro gran Rey yo le soy en cargo, y le daré de lo que tuviere."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 90.

Cortes of what took place on a former occasion. The grand and polite Montezuma might well say that he would give of what he had to this unknown, though closely-related, foreign potentate; but this is a very different thing from promising vassalage and subjection; and, yet unconquered, talking like a defeated man and a prisoner.

Montezuma asks about De Córdova and Grijalva.

Montezuma then asked some very natural questions, such as whether Hernandez de Córdova and Grijalva were of the same nation as Cortes, and being answered in the affirmative, went on to say, how happy he was to see the Spaniards at his court. If he had sought to prevent them from coming there, it was not from any wish of his to exclude them, but because his subjects were so frightened at them, saying that they threw thunder and lightning about, that they were savage deities, and follies of that sort. For his part, now that he had seen the Spaniards, his opinion of them was raised. He held them in more esteem than before, and would give them of whatever he possessed.

Rational and dignified discourse of Montezuma.

Cortes and all the Spaniards present responded with fitting courtesies; and then Montezuma smilingly, for he was a humorous man, though a

dignified one,* made the same remarks about the calumnies and exaggerations of the Tlascalans which have been quoted before.

Cortes, in his turn smiling, replied with some commonplace remark about men always speaking ill of those whom they were opposed to; and then the interview was gracefully brought to an end by gifts of gold and garments, which were distributed amongst all the Spaniards who assisted at the interview.

I think it must be admitted that on this occasion† the great King of the West comported himself with much discretion and dignity, putting aside politely, and yet respectfully, any discussion upon theological matters, as if he had been a worldly statesman of our own time, always anxious to get rid of these subjects, as knowing how little they tend to the outward peace and physical happiness of mankind.

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* "Porque en todo era mui regozijado, en su hablar de gran Señor."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 90.

† It is curious that Cortes does not say anything of this interview in his letter to Charles the Fifth: the reason for such an omission may be because he had received no such commission as he claimed, and therefore did not like to make such a statement to the Emperor.

A well-known writer, and one thoroughly skilled in Mexican affairs, the celebrated Jesuit Acosta, remarks, in reference to the proceedings of this day, or of some other early day after the arrival of Cortes in Mexico, that many persons were of opinion that the Spaniards might have made anything they pleased of Montezuma and his people, and have introduced the gospel without bloodshed. "But," as he adds, "the judgments of God are high, and the faults on both sides were many, and so the thing turned out very differently."*

The Gospel might have been introduced peaceably.

This opinion may be well-founded; but, on the other hand, it must be remarked that the Mexicans were not in a similar state to those Indians amongst whom the most remarkable conversions have been made by peaceful means. An established priesthood, with large revenues, pompous

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* "Es opinion de muchos, que como aquel dia quedó negocio puesto, pudieran con facilidad hazer del Rey y reyno lo que quisieran, y darles la Ley de Christo con gran satisfacion y paz. Mas los juizios de Dios son altos, y los pecados de ambas partes muchos, y assí se rodeó la cosa muy diferente."—Acosta, *Hist. Nat. y Moral de las Indias*, lib. vii. cap. 25.

buildings, and a carefully regulated ritual, formed an element in the Mexican Empire which would render it much less convertible to Christianity than were the comparatively primitive people of Copan and Paraguay, or the wandering tribes in Florida. Amongst these latter is to be found the most remarkable instance of conversion, or rather of opportunity for conversion, that, I think, ever was recorded. It is to be met with in the narrative of Cabeça de Vaca. He and his companions, shipwrecked, naked, and for a long time treated as slaves, acquired, probably through their medical knowledge, or greater discernment in things in general, an influence, as of gods, over the natives of Florida. The remarkable point of the narrative is, that they were not held in this high consideration by one tribe only, but by all they came amongst; and that they were borne in triumph from one tribe to another, all men's goods in the tribe at whose grounds they arrived being brought out before them, and, to the great vexation of the Christians, divided amongst their followers, who consisted of the preceding tribe.*

Mexicans not easy to convert.

Treatment of Cabeça de Vaca and his companions in Florida.

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* "I los robadores para consolarles los decian, que

The whole of this narrative seems to throw some light upon the extraordinary stories which pervade the Indian traditions in America of men of higher cultivation than their own who come and give the natives laws and manners, and then vanish away, having promised to return.

Such transactions, however, were only possible amongst a primitive people, and were not to be expected to take place amongst the Mexicans, though much, doubtless, might have been done to introduce Christianity gradually amongst them.

Cortes asks for leave to see the temple.

These speculations are a very fit introduction to the next public proceeding of Cortes, which was to ask for leave to see the great temple, dedicated to the Mexican god of war. This request

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eramos Hijos del Sol, í que teniamos poder para sanar los enfermos, í para matarlos, í otras mentiras, aun maiores que estas, como ellos las saben mejor hacer quando sienten que les conviene: í dixéronles, que nos llevasen con mucho acatamiento, í tuviesen cuidado de no enojarnos en ninguna cosa, í que nos diesen todo quanto tenian, í procurasen de llevarnos donde havia mucha Gente, í que donde llegasemos robasen ellos, í saqueasen lo que los otros tenian, porque así era costumbre."—*Naufragios de* ALVAR NUNEZ CABEÇA DE VACA, *en la Florida*, cap. xxviii. tom. 1. BARCIA, *Historiadores*.

Montezuma granted with apparent pleasure. But, for fear lest the Spaniards should do any dishonour to his gods, as they had done in the provinces, he resolved to go himself to the temple; and accordingly he repaired thither with his accustomed pomp. On their way, the Spaniards visited the great market-place, which perhaps was the best means of learning, in a short time, the skill and riches of the people by whom they were surrounded.

Visits the market on his way.

In this vast area each kind of merchandize had its own quarter; and it would be difficult to specify any kind which was not to be seen there. To begin with the most shameful merchandize, namely, that of human beings, there were as many to be found for sale as there were in Spain of those "negroes whom the Portuguese bring from Guinea."* Then, every kind of eatable, every form of dress, medicines, perfumes, un-

Commodities sold there.

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* "Esclavos y esclavas; digo, que traian tantos á vender á aquella gran plaça, como traen los Portugueses los negros de Guinea, e traian los atados en unas varas largas, con collares á los pescueços, porque no se les huyessen, y otros dexavan sueltos."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 92.

guents, furniture, lead, tin, brass, copper, and gold and silver ornaments wrought in the form of fruit, adorned the porticoes and allured the passer-by. Paper, that great material of civilization, was to be obtained in this wonderful emporium; also every kind of earthenware, salt, wood, tobacco, razors made of obsidian,* dressed and undressed skins, cotton of all colours in skeins, painters' colours, building materials, and manure; wine, honey, wax, charcoal; and little dogs. Convenience was well considered; porters were to be hired,† and refreshments to be obtained. One curious thing, which Cortes noticed, was, that every commodity was sold by number or by measure, and not by weight.

Wise regulations of the market.

With regard to the regulations under which this vast bazaar was held, it may be noticed that

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* "Obsidian, jade, and Lydian-stone, are three minerals, which nations ignorant of the use of copper or iron, have in all ages employed for making keen-edged weapons. . . . This variety of lava" (obsidian) "was employed as an object of ornament: and the inhabitants of Quito made beautiful looking-glasses with an obsidian divided into parallel laminæ."—HUMBOLDT's *Personal Narrative*, vol. i. chap. 2.

† "Hay Hombres como los que llaman en Castilla Ganapanes, para traher cargas."—LORENZANA, p. 103.

the Mexicans had arrived at that point of civilization, where fraud is frequent in the sale of goods; but, superior even to ourselves in this day, they had a counterpoise to this in a body of officers called judges,* who sat in a court-house on the spot, and before whom all causes and matters relating to the market were tried, and who commanded the delinquents to be punished. There were also officers who went continually about the market-place, watching what was sold, and the measures which were used. When they found a false one they broke it. This market was so much frequented, that the busy hum of all the buying and selling might be heard at the distance of a league. Among the Spaniards there were soldiers who had served in Italy and in the East; and they said, that a market-place so skil-

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* "Hay en esta gran Plaza una muy buena Casa como de Audiencia, donde estan siempre sentados diez, ó doze Personas, que son Jueces, y libran todos los casos, y cosas, que en el dicho Mercado acaecen, y mandan castigar los Delinqüentes. Hay en la dicha Plaza otras Personas, que andan continuo entre la gente, mirando lo que se vende, y las medidas con que miden lo que venden; y se ha visto quebrar alguna que estaba falsa." —LORENZANA, p. 104.

fully laid out, so large, so well-managed, and so full of people, they had never seen. In considering the list of commodities which were to be sold there, and which may serve to make life tolerable,

Things deficient in the market of Mexico.

I note only three deficiencies,—bills of exchange, newspapers, and books; but any one of these things indicates a civilization of a higher order than the Mexican; and they were reserved to be invented by some of the steadiest and subtlest thinkers* of the great races of the world.

From the market-place the Spaniards moved on towards the temple, or to what, as before noticed, might have been justly called the sacred city, for even before they reached the central square, they came upon courts and enclosures, which, doubtless, were the precincts of the temple, and must have been in some way connected with its services. At last they reached the polished surface of the great court, where not even a straw or any particle of dirt was suffered to remain. Amidst all the temples which adorned this court one stood pre-eminent, where Montezuma himself was wor-

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* The Italians have, I believe, the best claim to the merit of having invented bills of exchange.

shipping. On seeing Cortes, the king sent six priests and two of his principal nobles to conduct the Spanish Commander up to the summit of the temple. When they came to the steps, which were a hundred and fourteen in number, the attendant Mexicans wished to take Cortes by the arms, and to assist him in ascending; but he dispensed with their aid, and, accompanied by his men, mounted to the highest platform, where they saw a horrible figure like a serpent, with other hideous figures, and much blood newly spilt. What a change from the wisdom of the market-place to the sublime folly and foulness of the temple!

Cortes and his men ascend the temple.

At this moment Montezuma came forth from the chamber, or chapel, if we may call it so, where he had been worshipping. Receiving Cortes and his company with much courtesy, he said, "You must be tired, my Lord Malinché, after your ascent to this our great temple." But Cortes replied that "he and his men were never tired by anything."*

Then the King took Cortes by the hand, and

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* "Que él, ni nosotros no nos cansavamos en cosa ninguna."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 92.

bade him look down upon the great city, and upon the surrounding cities on the border of the lake—those beautiful glistening satellites of the primary and pre-eminent Mexico. Cortes, however, does not tell us anything of the beauties and wonders which were to be seen in this view from the summit of the temple. It is the inherent curse of politic and foreseeing men, that they enjoy, and even recognize, the present so much less than other men do. The common soldiers looked down and gazed in all directions, noticing the temples, the oratories, the little towers, the floating gardens,* and those light and graceful drawbridges,

View from the summit of the great temple.

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* "They plait and twist willows, and roots of marsh plants, or other materials, together, which are light, but capable of supporting the earth of the garden firmly united. Upon this foundation they lay the light bushes that float on the lake, and over all, the mud and dirt which they draw up from the bottom of the same lake. Their regular figure is quadrangular; their length and breadth various; but as far as we can judge, they are about eight perches long, and not more than three in breadth, and have less than a foot in elevation above the surface of the water. These were the first fields which the Mexicans owned after the foundation of Mexico; there they first cultivated the maize, great pepper, and other plants necessary for their support.

which were especially to be seen in the surrounding towns. It was then that a murmuring talk arose amongst them about Rome and Constantinople, and all that each man had seen of what was deemed, till this moment, most beautiful in the world. But, as Cortes looked down, what other thoughts were his! A poet speaks of "the cloudy foreheads of the great." The child and the rustic, in simple envy of those above them, who seem to them all-powerful, little dream of the commanding cares and hungry anxieties which beset the man who has undertaken to play any considerable part in the world. And, if ever there was a man who

The anxious thoughts of a leader of men.

In progress of time, as those fields grew numerous (*eccessivamente moltiplicati*, orig.) from the industry of those people, there were among them gardens of flowers and odoriferous plants, which were employed in the worship of their gods, and served for the recreation of the nobles. . . . . In the largest gardens there is commonly a little tree, and even a little hut to shelter the cultivator, and defend him from rain, or the sun. . . . . That part of the lake where those floating gardens are, is a place of infinite recreation, where the senses receive the highest possible gratification."—CLAVIGERO, *History of Mexico*, book vii. p. 375. See also TORQUEMADA, lib. xiii. cap. 32.

had undertaken a great part, without rehearsal, it was Cortes. The multitude of people moving to and fro, which enlivened the beautiful prospect in the eyes of the common soldier, afforded matter of most serious concern to the man who had to give orders for the next step in this untrodden wilderness of action. Even the hum of the market-place was no pleasant murmur in his ears, for he could readily translate it into the fierce cries of thousands of indignant warriors.

The thoughts of Cortes as he looked down from the temple.

It is often happy for us that we do not know the thoughts of those who stand by us, or perhaps on this occasion, the lofty politeness of the sovereign and the warrior might have changed into an instant death-struggle as to which of them should be hurled down first from that platform, and complete the sacrifice of that eventful day.

Cortes, in whom Policy slumbered only when Religion spoke to him, said to Father de Olmedo, "It appears to me, that we might just make a trial of Montezuma, if he would let us set up our church here?"* The wiser priest replied,

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* "Paréceme Señor Padre, que será bien que demos un tiento á Monteçuma; sobre que nos dexe hazer aquì nuestra Iglesia."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 92.

that it would be very well to make that request if there were any likelihood of its being successful, but that the present did not appear to him the time for making it, nor did he see in Montezuma the humour to grant it. Upon this Cortes abandoned the idea, and merely asked the king to allow the Spaniards to see his gods. To this Montezuma, after having consulted his priests, consented; and the Spaniards entered those dread abodes of idolatry.

There is a family likeness in most idols; and, when the Spaniards had advanced within the little tower where the hall of the "god of war" was, they found two hideous creatures seated on an altar and under a canopy, large and bulky figures, the one representing Huitzilopochtli and the other Tezcatlipuk. The god of war had a broad face, wide mouth, and terrible eyes. He was covered with gold, pearls, and precious stones; and was girt about with golden serpents. In one hand he held a bow, in the other arrows. A little idol, his page, stood by him, holding a lance and a golden shield. On Huitzilopochtli's neck, were the faces of men wrought in silver, and their hearts in gold. Close by were

The Mexican idols: the god of war.

braziers with incense, and on the braziers three real hearts of men who had that day been sacrificed.

All around, the walls were black with clotted blood.*

Tezcatlipuk.

On the left hand of the god of war was Tezcatlipuk, with a countenance like that of a bear, and with mirrors for eyes. A string of little demons encircled his waist. Five human hearts, of men that day sacrificed, were burning before this idol.

Centeotl.

A third false deity, the "deity of increase," half woman,† half crocodile, gilded and jewelled like the rest, was to be seen, not in the same room with Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipuk, but enniched above, in a recess that was formed in the highest part of the tower.

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* Literary men and antiquarians have blamed the efforts of those who sought to efface the memory of these accursed idolatries from the minds of the Indians. We cannot wonder, however, at any sacrifice of books, pictures, or even buildings, for that great end.

† Bernal Diaz says "half man," but I think the deity must have been Centeotl, the Mexican Ceres, the goddess of *centli* (maize).

In this recess, too, the walls and the altar on which the idol stood were covered with blood. The smell of the great hall had been like that of some slaughter-house; but in the recess, the crowning horror of this accursed place, the detestable odour was so overpowering, that the only thought of the Spaniards who had ascended into this part of the building was how most quickly to get out of it.* Here was a great drum made of serpents' skins, which, when struck, gave forth a melancholy hideous sound; and here were instruments of sacrifice, and many hearts of men.

Cortes must testify against these idolatries.

It might be prudent, or it might not be prudent, but Cortes felt that he must give some utterance to his feelings; and we may well wonder at the reserve with which he spoke, rather than at his being able to refrain no longer. With a smile he said, "I do not know, my Lord Montezuma, how so great a king and so learned a man as you are, can have avoided to perceive (literally, should not have collected in your

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* "Era tanto el hedor, que no viamos la hora de salirnos á fuera."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 92.

thoughts) that these idols of yours are not gods, but evil things which are called 'devils;' and that you and all your priests may be satisfied of this, do me the favour not to take it ill that we should put in the lofty recess of this tower a cross, and then in the hall where your deities Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipuk are, we will make a compartment where we may put an image of Our Lady (this Montezuma had already seen), and you will behold the fear which those idols that keep you in delusion have of it."

Montezuma defends his false gods.

But Montezuma and his priests were troubled and grieved at these words; and the King said, "My Lord Malinché, if you believe that it is your business to say such dishonourable things as you have said of my gods, I will not show them to you. We hold them for very good gods; and they give us health and rain, harvests and fine weather, victories and whatever we desire: it is our business to adore them, and to sacrifice unto them. I must request of you that no more words be uttered to their dishonour." To this speech, and to the alteration of aspect in the King, which Cortes noticed with the swift appreciation of a courtier, the Spaniard with an apparently gay

countenance replied, "It is time that Your Highness and we should go."

To this Montezuma answered that it was well, but that for his part he must stay behind, to pray and make sacrifice for the sin he had committed in permitting the Spaniards to ascend the great temple, and for his having been the cause of injurious words having been uttered against his gods. Upon this, the Spanish Commander, with all due courtesy, took leave; and his men, descending with difficulty the steps of the temple, marched back to their quarters, sickened and saddened, but somewhat enlightened as to the nature of the men by whom they were surrounded.

Cortes returns from the temple.

Coming into the light of day, hearing the busy tumult of the market-place and the merry noise of children playing in the sun; then catching bright glimpses of the water, and looking at the innumerable boats which plied along the streets; all that they had seen in the dark and dismal charnel-houses of Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipuk must have seemed to the Spaniards an ill-omened dream. Years would pass away, and they would become veterans, scarred with wounds and rejoicing in renown, before they would have time

to think over and to realize to themselves the full horror of the accursed things which they had looked upon that day.

Living in a Christian country and with every means of enlightenment, we feel it difficult to comprehend how so much civilization, or what looks very like it, could be found in company with barbarous human sacrifices; but this apparent anomaly is soon explained, when we come to look into some of the prime causes of movement in the human soul. In justice to the Mexicans, we should consider what can be said for them. We of this age must not share the blind sentiments of horror which occupied the minds of Cortes and his followers, and served to justify their subsequent proceedings.

Some attempt to explain the horrors of the Mexican religion.

When we reflect upon the untoward, disastrous, and ridiculous aspect of human life—how, for instance, little things done, or neglected to be done, in youth, have so fatal an influence throughout a life-time,—when we behold the success of iniquity, and contemplate the immense injustice, and the singular infelicity, which often beset the most innocent of men—nay, further,

when we see the spitefulness of nature—for so it seems unless profoundly understood,—when we consider the great questions of human life, such as free will and the origin of evil, which are not explained now, but only agreed to be postponed in humble hopefulness, and which, in the earlier periods of the world's history, exercised to the full their malign discouragement,—we cannot wonder at the belief in evil deities of great power and supremacy. And, then, what more natural than to clothe such deities with the worst attributes of bad men, and to suppose that they must be approached with servility, and appeased by suffering. Then, further, what more natural than to offer to such gods of the best upon earth, namely, our fellow men.

It must not be forgotten that there was often a friendly feeling towards the persons sacrificed; and that in some cases they were looked upon as messengers to the gods, and charged with distinct messages.

The idea of human sacrifice, as pleasing to the gods, being once adopted in moments of victory, doubt, or humiliation, is soon developed. The evil practice becomes a system, and partakes of

the strength of all systems, taking root amongst the interests, the passions, and the pleasures of mankind; and, thenceforward, he will be a bold man, and, rarer still, an audacious thinker, not given to stop anywhere in thought, who shall lift himself above the moral atmosphere of his nation, and shall say, "This thing which all consent in, and which I have known from my youth upward, is wrong."

Having thus stated something on behalf of the Mexicans, which does not however make the indignation of the Spanish soldiers less reasonable or natural, I take up the thread of the story, and return to the little garrison of Cortes in the midst of this splendid city of cruel and polite idolaters.

I must call the attention of the reader to the fact, that a work which, for convenience, is constantly referred to in these pages as Lorenzana, is a collection of the letters of Cortes, made by Francisco Antonio Lorenzana, Archbishop of Mexico, and published, with maps and annotations of some value, in 1770. For an account of these letters, which, from their length, may more fitly be called despatches, see Stevens's "American

Bibliographer." The first despatch is lost: the second contains the occurrences from 16th of July, 1519, to 30th of October, 1520; the third contains the occurrences from 30th of October, 1520, to 15th of May, 1522. The second and third despatches are those principally referred to in this biography.

CHAPTER V.

Difficult position of Cortes—Capture of Montezuma.

What course left for Cortes?

THE question as to what Cortes was to do next, was a most difficult one. If we put ourselves, in imagination, into his place, and lay down several plans of action, we shall find great difficulties inherent in any of them. Was he to play the part of an ambassador, and, after observing the nature of the country, and endeavouring to form some league of amity with the monarch, to return to Cuba or to Spain? He would but have returned to a prison or a grave; for the ambassadorial capacity which he assumed was a mere pretext.

Was he to make a settlement in the country? For that purpose he must get safe out of Mexico, return through territories whose gods he had insulted, and whose people he had slaughtered, and

taking up a position at his city of Vera Cruz, remain exposed to the revengeful attacks by sea of his employer, the Governor of Cuba.

Was he to be a missionary or a trader? By what unfit men was he surrounded for such enterprises as these!

His only career was conquest; and unfortunately, in the rapidity of that conquest lay his chief hope of safety. Now, what is so swift as terror? What could he do in that way, what hostage could he secure, which should paralyze at once the arms of the vigorous multitudes who surrounded him, waiting but a despot's nod to make at least the endeavour to overwhelm these unwelcome strangers?

There was no such hostage but the person of the king himself! True that this monarch had received Cortes graciously and grandly, and it would be an act of vast perfidiousness thus to requite his hospitality. But policy does not take the virtues, or the affections, into council. This act of treachery seemed the safest thing to be done, and, therefore, with Cortes, it was the best. I have shown that the destruction of the fleet was not so great a transaction as it has often been

represented to be, and that other people shared in it; but this projected seizure of Montezuma's person belonged to Cortes alone, and whatever greatness there was in it, call it great prudence or call it great iniquity, was his. I am reminded of a maxim, full of wisdom, uttered by a man versed in conspiracy,* who said that there are certain positions of affairs, in which it is impossible to make a step which shall not be a wrong one: but that men do not come into those positions without some considerable fault of their own. The fault in the position of Cortes was an incurable one, namely, the uncertainty of support from the mother-country, but it was a fault occasioned by his original misconduct to his employer, Velazquez. In the greatness of the conquest we are apt to forget the poor position of the conqueror, and to speak of him as if he had been a powerful prince, or an authorised general, with all the strength and the responsibility of such a station; whereas he was merely a brilliant adventurer, having lost the authority with which he was originally clothed. It was the misfor-

Fatal position of Cortes.

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* Cardinal de Retz.

tune that beset nearly all the Spanish conquests in America, that they were made by men of insufficient power and authority for such transactions. Another Alexander was required to conquer another India. Had there been a powerful European prince for such an undertaking, consolidation might have gone hand in hand with conquest; and millions, absolutely millions, of lives might have been saved. But that want of time which is the saddest and most common deficiency for all men in power, the disturbed state of Europe at this period, and the inability to recognize what is most requisite to be done, which belongs to each successive generation, prevented the conquest of America from taking anything like its highest form, and threw it into the hands of men who lacked the authority to maintain themselves in the position which they had assumed.

Also of other Spanish conquerors.

The reader, who probably knows the outline of the story of Cortes, may be surprised at his career being considered otherwise than most successful. On the contrary, however, I venture to think that a conquest is most dearly purchased which is accompanied by large destruction of the conquered people.

The resolve of Cortes.

Having made an apology for the resolve of Cortes, which he would probably have thought very needless, we may proceed to consider its execution. The deed, once resolved upon, was sure to be swiftly accomplished. That miserable interval between resolve and execution, which is the torment and the ruin of weak men, was a thing not known in the career of Cortes. He had not been one week in Mexico before he resolved to seize the person of Montezuma, had chosen his pretext for doing it, and had arranged his plans.

His pretext.

The plea that he made use of was a skirmish (into the details of which we need not enter) between Juan de Escalante, who had been left in command at Villa Rica, and the people of a neighbouring town, called by the Spaniards Almeria, in which skirmish Escalante and six Spaniards had fallen. That this affair was only important as it furnished a pretext, may be seen from the account which Cortes gives of the transaction to Charles the Fifth, in which he states that from some things which he had seen since his entry into Mexico, and also from what he had observed on his journey, it appeared to him, "that it was convenient for the royal service, and for the security of the

Spaniards under his command, that Montezuma should be in his power, and should not have complete liberty." Cortes adds, that he feared lest there should be an unfavourable change in the Mexican Monarch's conduct towards the Spaniards, "especially as we Spaniards are somewhat difficult to live with, and troublesome, and if Montezuma should take offence, he was powerful enough to do us much harm; so much so, indeed, that we might be utterly destroyed" (literally, *that there might be no memory left of us*).* Moreover, Cortes thought that, Montezuma once in his power, all the provinces of the Mexican Empire would easily be brought under the Spanish dominion.

Cortes communicated to his soldiers his inten-

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* "Que convenia al Real Servicio, y á nuestra seguridad, que aquel Señor estuviesse en mi poder, y no en toda su libertad, porque no mudasse el propósito, y voluntad, que mostraba en servir á Vuestra Alteza, mayormente, que los Españoles somos algo incomportables, é importunos, é porque enojándose nos podria hacer mucho daño, y tanto, que no oviesse memoria de nosotros, segun su gran poder."—LORENZANA, p. 89.

tion of seizing Montezuma; and they, according to Bernal Diaz, passed the night in prayer to the Lord, "that the enterprise might be so conducted as to redound to His holy service."* In the morning, careful preparations having been made, Cortes went to the palace, accompanied by five of his principal captains and his two interpreters, Geronimo de Aguilar and Donna Marina. So cautious a general took care to keep up the line of communication between his advanced position and the main body of his forces in the fortress, by stationing parties of his men at the points where four streets met.† When arrived at the palace, Cortes, according to his own account, began by talking playfully to Montezuma, who gave him on that occasion some golden ornaments and one of his daughters. The Spanish General then turned the discourse to the affair of Almeria, and to the loss of the Spaniards under Escalante, in which a certain unfortunate cacique was con-

The mode of execution.

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* "Rogando á Dios, que fuesse de tal modo, que redundasse para su santo servicio."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 95.

† "Dejando buen recaudo en las encrucijadas de las Calles."—LORENZANA, p. 84.

cerned, whose name, as corrupted by Spanish pronunciation, was Qualpopoca. Cortes, who, as Bernal Diaz says, "did not care a chestnut about the matter" (*no lo tenia en una castaña*), made it out to be a concern of the most serious nature. He was answerable, he declared, to his king for the Spaniards who had been killed; and Qualpopoca had said that it was by Montezuma's orders he had committed this assault. The Monarch immediately took from his wrist a bracelet with a seal bearing the effigy of the Mexican god of war, and giving it in charge to some of his attendants, ordered that they should go to the scene of this skirmish between the Spaniards and his people, that they should inquire into the matter, and bring Qualpopoca bound before him.

Cortes insists upon Montezuma coming to the Spanish quarters.

This was a very prompt procedure, and Cortes thanked the monarch for it, but said that, until the matter was cleared up, Montezuma must come and live with the Spaniards in their quarters, which, it is almost needless to add, they had taken care to make a strong post of. The Spanish general begged Montezuma not to be annoyed at this request, saying that he was not to be a prisoner, but was to conduct his government as

before, and that he should occupy what apartments he pleased, and, indeed, that he would have the Spaniards in addition to his own attendants, to serve him in whatsoever he should command.

Montezuma's amazement.

But it may be conjectured that all these soothing words were not even heard by the Mexican monarch, who sat stupified by the vast audacity of the demand. Here was a man, into whose eyes other men had not ventured to look; who was accustomed, when rarely he moved from his palace, to see the crowd prostrate themselves before him as he went along, as if he were indeed a god; who never set foot upon the ground:* and

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* "Jamas puso sus piés en el suelo, sino siempre llevado en ombros de Señores."—ACOSTA, *Hist. Nat. y Mor. de Indias*, lib. vii. cap. 22. This assertion, that Montezuma never set foot on the ground, must be confined to his appearances in public; for, when he went in disguise, like an Eastern caliph, to ascertain whether his judges took bribes, he must have gone about like any other man. "Tambien se disfraçava muchas vezes, y aun echava quien ofreciesse cohechos á sus Juezes, ó los provocase a cosa mal hecha, y en cayendo en algo desto, era luego sentencia de muerte con ellos."—ACOSTA, *ibid.*

now, in his own palace, undefeated, not bound, with nothing to prepare him by degrees for such a fearful descent of dignity, he was asked by a few strangers, whom he had sought to gain by hospitality, and to whom he had just given rich presents, to become their prisoner in the very quarters which he had himself graciously appointed for their entertainment. It is a large assertion to make of anything, that it is the superlative of its kind, but it must, I think, be admitted, that the demand of Cortes was the most audacious that was ever made, and showed an impudence (there is no other fitting word) which borders upon the heroic. At this day, though we have all known the story from childhood, it seems as if it were a new thing; and we still wonder what Montezuma will say in reply to Cortes.

The unparalleled request of Cortes.

The Monarch's answer, when he could speak at all, was the following: "I am not one of those persons who are put in prison. Even if I were to consent, my subjects would never permit it."*

Montezuma refuses.

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* "Je ne suis pas de ceux que l'on met en prison;

Cortes persists.

Cortes urged his reasons why Montezuma should adopt the course proposed by the Spaniards, but, as these reasons were based upon falsehood, it is no wonder, that even in the opinion of one of his followers, he should have appeared to have the worse of the argument.* This controversy lasted some time, and Cortes himself speaks of the prolixity of the discourse, and betrays all the insolence of a conqueror, when he declares that it is needless to give account of all that passed, as not being substantial to the case.†

Meanwhile the peril of the Spaniards was increasing, and the patience of these fierce men was

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même si j'y consentais mes sujets ne le souffriraient jamais."—FERNANDO D'ALVA IXTLILXOCHITL, *Hist. des Chichimèques*, chap. 85;—TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages*. This account, given by the historian of Mexican origin, is confirmed in some respects by Bernal Diaz, who says, "Que no era persona la suya para que tal le mandassen."—Cap. 95.

* "Cortés le replicó mui buenas razones; y el Montecuma le respondia mui mejores."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 95.

† "Acerca de esto pasamos muchas pláticas, y razones, que serían largas para las escribir, y aun para dár cuenta de ellas á Vuestra Alteza, algo prolijas, y tambien no sustanciales para el caso."—LORENZANA, p. 86.

fast passing away, when one of them, a man with a harsh voice, exclaimed, "What is the use of all these words? Let him yield himself our prisoner, or we will this instant stab him. Wherefore, tell him that if he cries out, or makes disturbance, we must kill him, for it is more important in this conjuncture that we should secure our own lives than lose them." Montezuma turned to Donna Marina for the meaning of this fierce utterance; and we cannot but be glad that it was a woman who had to interpret these rough words to the falling Monarch, and even to play the part of counsellor as well as interpreter. She begged him to go with the Spaniards without any resistance; for, she said, she knew that they would honour him much, like a great lord as he was; and that on the other side lay the danger of immediate death.

Marina counsels the Monarch.

The unfortunate Montezuma now made a last effort to obviate the dire indignity. He said, "My Lord Malinché, may this please you:—I have one son and two daughters, legitimate. Take them as hostages, and do not put this affront upon me. What will my nobles say, if they see me borne away as a prisoner?" But Cortes was

not the man to swerve in the least from his purpose, and he said that Montezuma must come with them, and that no other thing would do.

Montezuma yields.

The Monarch was obliged to yield. It is said, and is not improbable, that he was urged to declare that he acted thus in obedience to a response given by Huitzilopochtli, the Mexican god of war, though this was hardly the fitting deity to choose as the imputed instrument of such ignoble counsel.

Orders were instantly given to prepare apartments for Montezuma in the Spaniards' quarters. The Mexican nobles, whose duty it was to bear his litter, came at his bidding, and prepared themselves, barefooted, with their accustomed humility, and with more than their accustomed affection, to place the litter on their shoulders. But, as all pomp and state, even in the mightiest monarchies, requires some time for arrangement and preparation, it appears that the equipage itself was but a poor one.* And so, in a sorry manner, borne on by his weeping nobles, and in deep silence, Montezuma quitted his palace, never to return. He

Montezuma quits his palace.

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* "Trahian unas Andas, no muy bien aderezadas, llorando, lo tomaron en ellas, con mucho silencio."—LORENZANA, p. 86.

was forthwith taken to the Spanish quarters. On his way he encountered throngs of his faithful subjects, who, though they could hardly be aware of what the transaction meant, would, at the slightest nod of the Monarch, have thrown themselves upon the swords of the Spaniards, in all the plenitude of devotion of a people who believed in their King as the greatest of men, and as the vicegerent of their gods on earth.

But no such signal came. Slowly and silently the litter passed onwards; and it must have been with strange misgivings that the people saw their Monarch encompassed by those whom they had long known to be their enemies, the Tlascalan allies of Cortes, and by a strange race of bearded, armed men, who seemed, as it were, to have risen from the earth, to appal their nobles and to affront their religion.

This is an unparalleled transaction. There is nothing like it, I believe, in the annals of the world.

Monte-zuma's despotism the cause of his ruin.

The completeness of the despotism of Monte-zuma was a great part of his ruin. It was noticed by the Spaniards, as they entered Mexico, that his grandees did not dare to look him in the face.

To use the expressive words of the chronicler, "they did not, in thought even, look up at him, but kept their eyes fixed on the wall."* It was very natural, therefore, for Cortes to think that striking a blow at the head would paralyze all the body politic in Mexico. He would hardly have thought of seizing any one of the Chiefs of Tlascala, where there was a Senate and men of nearly equal authority. In such a case the indignity is felt by all, and the power to avenge it is scarcely lessened by the forced removal of any one.

In a short time the officers who had been sent for by Montezuma's signet were brought to Mexico. They were, in all, seventeen persons. Being asked if they had made the attack on the Spaniards by Montezuma's orders, they said no: but, upon their sentence being carried into execution, which sentence was, that they should be burnt,† they all confessed that it was by Montezuma's orders they had acted. Cortes, thereupon, added to the inhumanity of this atrocious sentence

Qualpopoca burnt.

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* "Todos estos señores ni por pensamiento le miravan á la cara."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 88.

† Very justly had Cortes displayed the blue and white flames upon his banner.

upon these unfortunate men the cruel indignity to Montezuma of putting him in irons during their execution, which took place in front of the palace. Terror was evidently what the Spaniard throughout relied upon; and, in doing so, he appealed to an influence which had long been predominant in the mind of every Mexican. One who loved them well,* and who devoted his life to their conversion, owns that their character was servile.† They had been taught, he says, to do nothing for the love of good, but all things solely from the fear of punishment. To appease their gods they would sacrifice their own children. In

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* Peter of Ghent.

† "Ils sont bien disposés à accepter notre religion; mais ce qui est mal, c'est que leur caractère est servile; ils ne font rien s'ils n'y sont forcés; on ne peut rien obtenir d'eux par la douceur ou la persuasion. Cela ne vient pas de leur naturel, c'est le résultat de l'habitude. On les a accoutumés à ne rien faire pour l'amour du bien, mais seulement par crainte des châtiments. Tous leurs sacrifices, qui consistaient à tuer leurs propres enfants ou à les mutiler, étaient le résultat de la terreur et non pas de l'amour que leurs dieux leur inspiraient." —*Lettre du Frère* PIERRE DE GAND, *en date du* 27 *Juin*, 1529. TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages*.

Terror a prevailing influence in the minds of the Mexicans.

truth, though taking many forms, terror was their god; and now a greater terror than they had hitherto known—a terror that could not be dispelled by their deities or their priests—had come amongst them. Premature decay is ever inherent in a one-sided cultivation of the powers, the intellect, or the affections, of mankind.

CHAPTER VI.

Consequences of the Capture—Montezuma becomes a vassal of the King of Spain—Pamphilo de Narvaez arrives upon the Coast—Cortes quits Mexico and defeats Narvaez.

THE pretext of Montezuma's capture being disposed of, we naturally turn to consider the consequences of the capture itself. We may imagine the rumours which ran through the city after Montezuma had been seen to accompany the Spaniards to their quarters—what a fervid noise rose up from the thronged market-place as the news was bruited there; how it was re-echoed in the gay streets, where the boatmen exchanged news with the passers-by on dry land; what fierce intonation was given to it in the sacred precincts of the temple, in the colleges, and the convents; and with what subdued

and stealthy voices the matter was discussed in the palaces of grave and powerful nobles.

Very little restraint upon Montezuma.

The wary Cortes strove to make the imprisonment look as much like a visit as possible. The Mexican King received ambassadors, directed judges, held his court, and continued to fulfil the functions of royalty nearly after the same fashion that he had been accustomed to. He was not restricted in his amusements, not even in the chase; and the slightest indignity shown to him by any Spaniard was severely punished by Cortes.

Meanwhile, what were the thoughts, the plans, the hopes, and the fears of this captive Monarch? Historians, who are often supposed to know everything, and to be able to write with an insight into the minds of their principal personages possessed only by the writers of fiction, will always be sorely puzzled to account for Montezuma's conduct. But, if one is obliged to give any explanation of it, that explanation must, I think, be based upon the ground that Montezuma really believed in the notion that the coming of Cortes and his men fulfilled the traditions of the Mexican race. A near acquaintance with the Spaniards gave Montezuma a greater insight into, and ap-

The probable thoughts of Montezuma in captivity.

prehension of, their power than was possessed by most of his subjects. Moreover, he doubtless perceived that his best chance of preserving his own life was in preventing disturbance of any kind. It must be recollected also, that in dealing with Cortes he had to encounter one of the craftiest of men; and, finally, the circumstances were such as would have greatly perplexed any man who was not perfectly ready to peril his own life,—who did not, to use an emphatic expression, carry his life in his hand.

There is nothing which can serve better to illustrate the limits of Montezuma's freedom of action at the present moment, the extent of the power which Cortes had gained by bringing Montezuma to his quarters, and the general feeling of the Mexican people, than the religious observances of the Mexican Monarch. Had the captive been of the religion of his captors, or of any religion which did not require public demonstration, a chapel might have been put up in his prison; and, comparatively speaking, much less would have been indicated by the Monarch's absence from, or presence at, religious rites and ceremonies. But, whatever was left of kingship

in Montezuma must be seen, or inferred, from his presence on the summit of that dread temple which overlooked the whole city. Accordingly, we find that Montezuma demanded permission from Cortes (what a humbling of the mighty!) to go to his temple to make sacrifices and to fulfil his devotions, in order, as he probably told the Spaniards, that he might show himself to his people, and, afterwards, give his captains and principal men to understand that it was by the command of his god Huitzilopochtli that he continued to remain in the power of the Spaniards. Cortes wisely granted the request, warning Montezuma at the same time, that if there were any disturbance, it would be at the peril of his life. To ensure the constant presence of that peril, one hundred and fifty Spanish soldiers were to accompany the King. Cortes also made it a condition that there should be no human sacrifices. There were, he said, the altars of the Christian religion and the image of "Our Lady," before which the King might pray. Montezuma promised that he would sacrifice no living soul, and set forth to the great temple in full state with his sceptre borne before him, his people and his nobles

Montezuma is allowed to go to the temple.

showing themselves as obedient and as respectful as heretofore. But the human sacrifices had already taken place, for, in the preceding night, four victims* had been sacrificed. The assertion, therefore, of Cortes, that while he was in Mexico no human sacrifices were allowed,† must be taken with considerable limitations. The truth is, that neither Cortes nor the prudent Father Olmedo could at that time prevent these sacrifices taking place, for, as Bernal Diaz says, "they were obliged to dissimulate with Montezuma, as Mexico was much disposed to revolt, and other great cities, together with the nephews of Montezuma." The King did not stay long in the temple, and when he returned, he was in high good humour, and gave largesse to the soldiers who accompanied him. It was, no doubt, a great satisfaction to the poor Monarch, to have been able to show himself to his people in so much apparent freedom.

Cortes cannot entirely prevent human sacrifices.

We discern from what has just been stated

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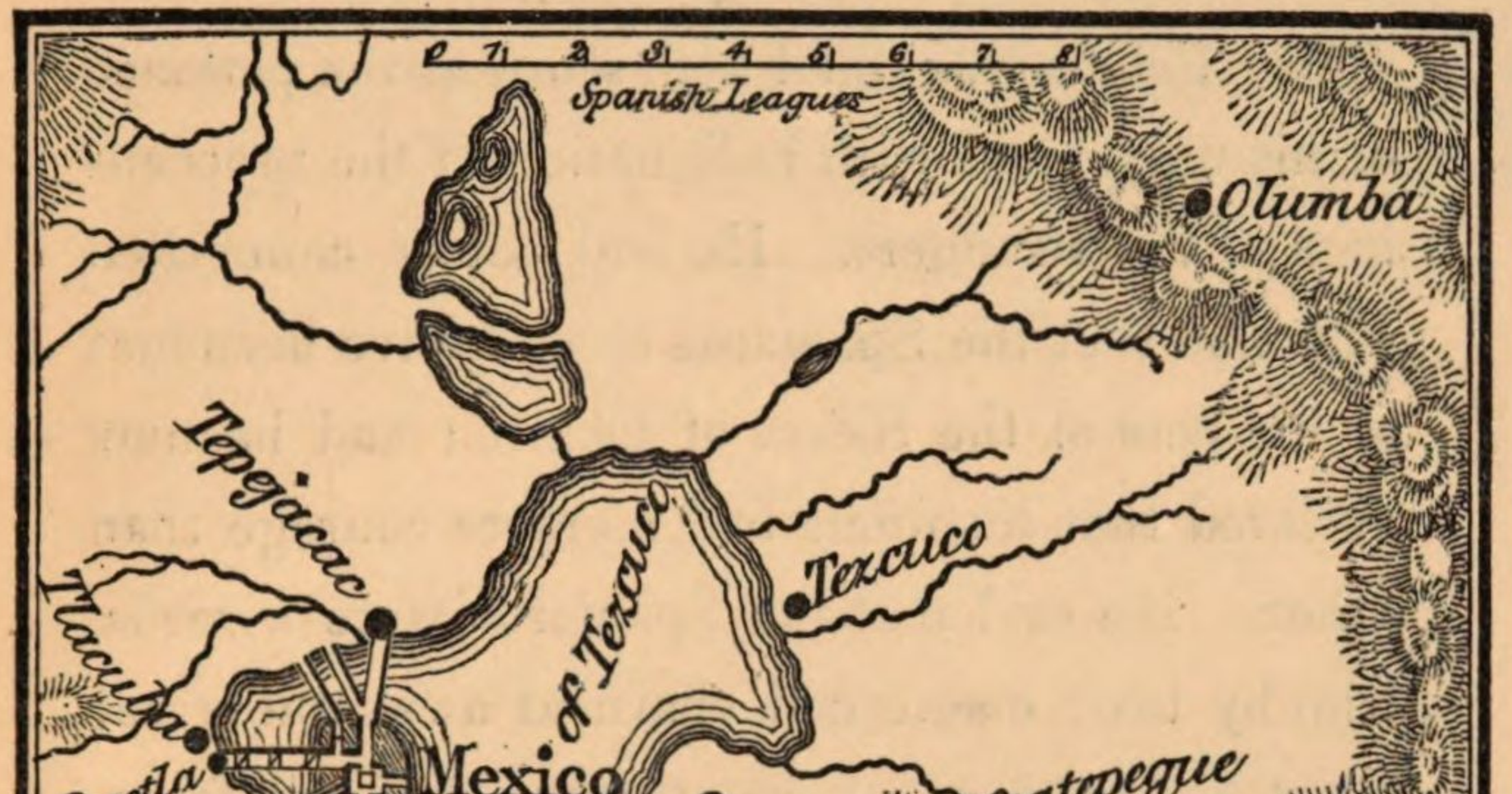
* "Ya le tenian sacrificado desde la noche ántes quatro Indios."—Bernal Diaz, cap. 98.

† "En todo el tiempo, que yo estube en la dicha Ciudad, nunca se vió matar, ni sacrificar alguna Criatura."—Lorenzana, p. 107.

about the inability of Cortes to put a stop to human sacrifice, that the Spanish General, though he had the person of the Mexican Monarch in his power, found still much to conquer in the disposition of the Mexican people, and in the near relations of Montezuma, some of whom were kings themselves. There can be no doubt that many of Montezuma's devoted adherents offered to make an effort to release their master, to all of whom he replied that it was the will of Huitzilopochtli that he should be kept in this durance, or, at least, he intimated that it was his own will that they should make no move for the present. There was one member, however, of the Mexican royal family who was not to be controlled so easily. This was Cacamatzin, the nephew of Montezuma, and King of Tezcuco, a beautiful city on the borders of the Salt Lake, in which Mexico was situated. There is not time in this world for discussing minutely the family affairs of semi-barbarian princes with unpleasant names, who have perished long ago; and, therefore, I shall merely relate the fate of Cacamatzin, who was the chief personage in the conspiracy amongst the Mexican

lords and princes which now threatened the domination of Cortes.



The Spanish General first sought to gain over Cacamatzin himself; but, failing in this, he then

Indignation of Cacamatzin, the King of Tezcuco.

endeavoured to bring the influence of Montezuma to bear upon his nephew, in order to allure him within the power of the Spaniards. But the brave young Prince was filled with scorn at the patience of his uncle, and with indignation at the proceedings of the strangers. He had before counselled war, and that the Spaniards should have been met at the pass of the Sierra of Chalco; and he now declared that his uncle had no more courage than a hen. He said that the Spaniards were wizards, who by their magic had charmed away the great heart and courage of Montezuma. Their force, he maintained, resided not in them, but in their gods, and in the great woman of Castille (*la gran muger de Castilla*), for thus he designated the Virgin.

Such an enemy must, at all cost, be secured; and Montezuma, won over by Cortes, and probably informed of his nephew's contemptuous speeches, consented to a deed, the most deplorable of any which mark his captivity. It appears that he had in his pay some of the principal persons at the Court of Tezcuco.* By their means

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* The Mexican historian, Ixtlilxochitl, makes the

Cacamatzin's people were to be gained over, and his person secured. This scheme was successful. At a midnight meeting, when the Tezucan King was concerting his plans for attacking Mexico, he was seized, hurried into a boat (the waters of the lake ran underneath his palace), and was carried off to Mexico, where Cortes put him in chains.

Capture of the King of Tezuco.

It was now less difficult for Cortes to persuade Montezuma to give some public sign of fealty to the King of Spain. The unfortunate Monarch consented to summon his nobles and dependent princes for that purpose. No Spaniard was present at the first interview of the King with his nobles, save Orteguilla, a page in the suite of Cortes. This boy, who was about thirteen years old, had learned Mexican at Cempoala, having been left for that purpose with the Cacique. On account of his knowledge of the language he had been placed in the service of Montezuma, and was

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brothers of Cacamatzin guilty of this treachery. "Cacamá, qui ne se défiait de rien, se livra à ses frères, qui, quand il fut dans le canot, s'emparèrent de sa personne, le conduisirent à Mexico, et le mirent entre les mains de Cortes."—*Histoire des Chichimèques*, chap. 86.

in the room, probably unobserved by the Monarch, while this conference was being held.

Conference of Montezuma with his nobles.

The account which we have of this conference, and for which the young page must be responsible, seems to be very like the truth. The Monarch began by reminding his counsellors of the history of their ancestors, and of the prophecy, that from the East should come those who were to have the lordship over the land of Mexico. It is in such expressions as the above that we may suspect a leaning towards that form of translation which would be most acceptable to the Spaniards; but where so much is mere conjecture, I would not say that Montezuma did not use such an expression, which he is made to emphasize by the following words of his speech, in which he declared that at that time, namely, upon the advent of those people, the Mexican Empire was to cease.

A despot like Montezuma cannot, without a diminution of dignity, quote any less important personages than the gods of his country. He accordingly proceeded to declare that the Spaniards who had now arrived were the expected strangers. He added, that Huitzilopochtli, having been sacrificed to, and consulted by the priests upon

the present juncture of affairs, would not respond as usual. All that the god would give them to understand was, that what he had said to them at other times was that which he gave now for a response, and that they should not ask him more.* The politic idol! No Delphian oracle could have shown more craft; but the conclusion which Montezuma chose to draw was, that the Mexicans should offer obedience to the King of Castille, "for," he added, with the faith in coming events proving favourable, which belongs to those who lack the presence of mind to strike a bold stroke now, "nothing comes of that at present,† and, as time goes on, we shall see if we have another better reply from our gods, and, as we shall see the occasion, so we will act; for the present," continued the Monarch, "that which I command and beseech you, is to give some sign of vassalage, and soon I will tell you what it may better befit us to do." He then told them how he was importuned by Malinché to give this sign of vas-

The response of the Mexican god of war.

Montezuma recommends to his lords an act of vassalage to the King of Spain.

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* "Que lo que les ha dicho otras vezes, aquello da aora por respuesta; é que no le pregunten mas"—Bernal Diaz, cap. 101.

† "Al presente no va nada en ello."—Bernal Diaz, cap. 101.

salage. Finally, he appealed to their loyalty and their gratitude. Had he not enriched them, made broad their lands, and given to them governments? If he were detained in this durance, was it not that their gods permitted it, and (as he had often had occasion to tell them) that Huitzilopochtli had enjoined upon him to stay where he was!

Grief of the Mexican King and his nobles.

The Mexican lords responded dutifully to their Sovereign's demands; but neither could they, nor could the Monarch himself, conceal the grief which insisted upon being felt at such humiliation. They wept; they sobbed: and for once the full flow of human passion was permitted at this precise court, in the presence of their dread Sovereign,—still dread to them, and never, perhaps, so dear. It represented the wailing of a whole nation, who had been accustomed to think themselves the greatest people upon earth, and who now saw their dignity trampled upon by a small body of unknown men.

Montezuma publicly recommends an act of vassalage.

When the conference broke up, Montezuma sent a messenger to Cortes, informing him, that the next day they would perform the act of vassalage to the King of Castille. Accordingly, on the following day, in the presence of Cortes and

the Spaniards, Montezuma made an address to his lords similar to the speech which he had uttered the day before, except that the hopes he had hinted, and the consolations he had suggested, in their private interview, did not, for manifest reasons, find a place in this deplorable discourse, which was an undisguised recommendation of vassalage to the King of Spain.

Montezuma could bring himself to utter the words wrung from him by the importunity of Cortes, but he could not command his feelings sufficiently to do so with anything like regal unconcern. From the first to the last his speech was broken by sobs,* and by uncontrollable emotion. When he had ended, his lords could not reply to him for some time, so great was their anguish, and so loud their lamentations. The Spaniards themselves were almost as much moved

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* "Lo qual todo les dijo llorando, con las mayores lágrimas, y suspiros, que un hombre podia manifestar; é assímismo todos aquellos Señores, que le estaban oiendo, lloraban tanto, que en gran rato ne le pudieron responder, Y certifico á Vuestra Sacra Magestad, que no habia tal de los Españoles, que oiesse el Razonamiento, que no hobiesse mucha compasion."—LORENZANA, p. 97.

as the Mexicans, and there was amongst them a soldier who wept as much as Montezuma himself.*

Act of vassalage takes place.

At last the Mexican lords were sufficiently composed to declare themselves, "jointly and severally," vassals to the King of Spain. Never was a great empire more strangely and suddenly, and, we may say, ludicrously humiliated. Never did the animal creation play so great a part. Had Montezuma possessed twenty horses, his Empire would, I am convinced, have been unconquerable by Cortes. This ceremony of professing vassalage was performed with all due legalities, a notary being present, and drawing up a solemn attestation of the proceedings.

As might be expected, one of the first things demanded of Montezuma, after this act of vassalage, was gold, of which a great quantity—no less in value than one hundred thousand ducats—was handed over to Cortes by the King.

The objects of Cortes.

Cortes, who possessed a mind of the highest capacity for civil as well as military business,

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* "Se nos enternecieron los ojos, y soldado huvo, que llorava tanto como Montezuma, tanto era el amor que le teniamos."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 101. I conjecture that this soldier was Bernal Diaz himself.

turned to the best account the power and influence which he had obtained over Montezuma. It will serve to illustrate the difference between a soldier who is more than half a statesman, and the vulgar, semi-animal conqueror, to see what were the objects Cortes instantly turned his attention to, instead of the ordinary pillage and rapine which would have absorbed the whole attention of a mere man of conquest in a similar position. But Cortes reminds us of Cæsar; and war with him was but a means to an end.

Mines.

He first took care to ascertain where the Mexican gold mines were to be found, and forthwith sent Spaniards, accompanied by Montezuma's officers, into the several provinces designated as gold-producing.

Harbourage in the Gulf of Mexico.

Then he took measures to accomplish that which had, from the first, been a great object with him,* namely, to discover a good harbour in the Gulf of Mexico. On inquiring of Montezuma in reference to this point, the Monarch replied, that he did not know of any such harbour

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* "Despues que en esta Tierra salté, siempre he trabajado de buscar Puerto en la Costa de ella."—LORENZANA, p. 93.

(and, indeed, the coast is very deficient in harbourage); but he provided Cortes with a map of the whole coast, made for the occasion, in which the roadsteads and the rivers were all set down; and then Cortes sent out an exploring party of Spaniards. It is remarkable that, both in this expedition, and in those which went out to survey the gold-producing provinces, the Spaniards found native chiefs who were willing to receive the messengers of Cortes, and who sent them back with gracious messages,—such was already the fame of the Spanish Conqueror throughout New Spain; but these same chiefs would not allow the officers of Montezuma to enter their country.

We may here mention a circumstance which, though slight in itself, serves well to illustrate the talents of Cortes for government, namely, that on the return of one of these exploring parties, finding that they gave a very favourable account of the fertility of the province they had visited, Cortes asked Montezuma to make a farm

Tillage. there for the King of Spain, where the cultivation of maize, and of cacao, the money of the country, was immediately commenced. It would

have been long before a mere soldier, such as Pedro de Alvarado, would have thought of these things.

But the triumph of Cortes, and that use of his power for which he has been likened to Judas Maccabæus, was in the destruction of the hideous Mexican idols, the cleansing of their foul chapels, and the stern forbidding of human sacrifice. Montezuma himself and many of his lords were present at the downfall of these idols.* It must have been a glorious sight; and Cortes, who has enough evil to answer for, may, on the other hand, be greatly praised for this deed, which alone must ever separate him from the Timours, Attilas, Genghis Khans, and other unmeaning, purposeless destroyers of mankind. Cortes tells his master Charles the Fifth, that Montezuma and the Mexican nobles assisted at the deposition of their idols with a joyful countenance. Great, then, must have been their command of countenance. What they felt in their hearts is not known to us; but any one

Destruction of idols.

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* "El dicho Muteczuma, y muchos de los Principales de la Ciudad, estuvieron con migo hasta quitar los Idolos, y limpiar las Capillas, y poner las Imágenes, y todo con alegre semblante."—LORENZANA, p. 107.

who has observed mankind, and seen that there is no stronger feeling, nor one which men are more proud of, than that which binds together a class, a sect, a guild, or a profession, must know what an intensity of enmity Cortes would thence-forward have to contend against, in the priesthood whom he had thus mocked and brought to nought. I much fear, too, that even if no human sacrifice took place on the sacred stones of the great pyramidal temple, yet that, in many a dark and secret chamber, the god of war was propitiated with the usual rites, and with no lack of human hearts laid before some rude and hastily-compounded effigy of their monster demon.

These plans for mining, farming, and surveying the country, and for converting the inhabitants, did not render Cortes inattentive to the first care he had on hand,—namely, that of self-defence. It was easy at a glance to see that the warlike science of the Spaniards, superior in all respects, would be remarkably so when manifested on the water; and, moreover, that a sure mode of withdrawal, or escape, would be provided for them, if they could have a few vessels launched upon the great Salt

Lake of Mexico. The first care, therefore, of Cortes was to build brigantines to navigate the Lake.

Cortes begins to build brigantines.

The position of Montezuma, one of the most remarkable recorded in history,* remained unchanged for many months. Cortes pursued with steadiness his own ends, waiting for good news and for any reinforcements that might come to him from Spain and from Hispaniola. Meanwhile, Montezuma continued to govern as usual, only that he governed in the direction prescribed by Cortes, that is, as regarded those affairs in which the Spanish Commander took an interest.

It was impossible that such a mode of government could be otherwise than most distasteful to the chief persons governed. To have a foreign Mayor of the Palace lording it over them, was more than any people could be expected to submit to; but in this case there were also other causes

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* He might be compared to one of the Merovingian Kings of France, with an all-powerful Mayor of the Palace; but then Montezuma's Mayor was a stranger who, as it were, had dropped amongst them like a meteoric stone.

of offence, each one sufficient to produce a revolution,—namely, in the imprisonment of several royal personages, near relations of the king, and in the changes which Cortes had made, or attempted to make, in matters of religion. It must not be forgotten that the priesthood of Mexico was also the fountain of education; and it may be conceived with what ardour the young men of the great city would embrace the side of the priesthood. For youth, according to that strange inversion often seen in human affairs, is the time at which prejudices are strongest, the capability of judging being at its lowest,—all which might be of little matter, however, but that the readiness to act upon those prejudices is ten times greater then than at any other period of life. A youth does not understand holding a strong opinion, and not doing something to enforce it. Nor was the present an occasion when the older and graver men of a city would be likely to impose the least restraint upon the younger and the more impatient. The King imprisoned, the royal family maltreated, the chiefs made nought of, a foreign enemy introduced into the capital, and, above all, the gods deposed and ridiculed, what could be

Government of Cortes hateful to the Mexicans.

expected but that the citizens of Mexico should be in a state of fervour and ebullition, hardly to be repressed even by the risk of immediate personal injury to their monarch?

Montezuma himself bore his imprisonment quietly enough for some time. Cortes ventured to tempt him on several occasions with the offer of liberty, which the Monarch refused to profit by, alleging that, if he were in entire liberty, he might be compelled by the importunity of his vassals to take such steps against the Spaniards as he himself would not approve of.*

It must be confessed that Montezuma appears to have been a mean-spirited person. He may, however, have suspected that the proposal of Cortes was only made for the purpose of sounding him, which certainly was the case. As the days went on, his nobles became more importunate, his priests more imperative, his own discontent more developed; and this feeling was probably aug-

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* "Sus Vasallos le importunassen, ó le induciessen á que hiciesse alguna cosa contra su voluntad, que fuesse fuera del servicio de V. A., y que él tenia propuesto de servir á Vuestra Magestad en todo lo á él posible."—LORENZANA, p. 88.

mented by various little slights to his dignity, of which history makes no mention, but upon which, as a monarch, he doubtless laid much stress.

Change in Montezuma.

There certainly was a change at this period in Montezuma's conduct, and the following are the motives for it which are stated by an historian,* who, whatever his inaccuracies, had at least the advantage, as a chaplain of Cortes, of hearing his version of the matter. The chaplain

The motives for that change.

assigns three motives for this change in Montezuma; the continued importunities of his people, an interview which the king had with the Devil, and the mutability of human nature. It is said by the Spanish historians, that Montezuma secretly prepared an army of an hundred thousand men; but this is not at all likely, as it could hardly have been done without the cognizance of the two thousand Tlascalans who were in the city.†

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* Gomara.

† I agree with what CLAVIGERO says upon this matter, who seems in general to show much judgment in writing upon these affairs. "Quasi tutti gli storici Spagnuoli dicono, que allorchè il Re fece chiamar Cortès per intimargli l'ordine di partire, avea allestito un esercito per farsi ubbidir per forza, se mai vi fosse qualche resistenza,

One day, in the sixth month of his imprisonment, the king, accompanied by several of his nobles, went into the square of the palace, and sent for Cortes. This was a very unusual proceeding. Cortes was accustomed to pay his court to Montezuma once or twice in the day, but had never been sent for before. "I do not like this novelty," he exclaimed; "please God there may be no mischief in it." Accompanied by a few Spaniards, Cortes went immediately into the Monarch's presence, who took him by the hand, led him into a room where seats were placed for them both, and then addressed him thus:—"I pray you, take your departure from this my city and land, for my gods are very angry that I keep you here. Ask of me what you may want, and I will give it you. Do not think that I say this to you in any jest, but very much in

Montezuma requests Cortes to depart.

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ma vi è una gran varietà fra loro, poichè alcuni affermano, ch'erano in arme cento mila uomini, altri scemano questo numero della metà, ed altri finalmente il riducono a cinque mila. Io mi persuado che vi sia stata in fatti qualche truppa allestita, non però per ordine del Re, ma soltanto d'alcuni Nobili di quelli, che aveano preso un più grand' impegno in questo affare."—CLAVIGERO, *Storia Antica del Messico*, tom. III. lib. ix. p. 112.

earnest. Wherefore, fulfil my desire, that so it may be done, whatever may occur."

Cortes, a man whom events might surprise, but could not discompose, replied at once: "I have heard what you have said, and thank you much for it. Name a time when you wish us to depart, and so it shall be." To this the polite Monarch replied again, "I do not wish you to go but at your own time" (meaning, he did not wish to hurry them away). "Take the time that seems to you necessary; and when you do go, I will give to you, Cortes, two loads of gold, and one to each of your companions." By the time that the conversation had advanced thus far, an excellent excuse for delay occurred to Cortes. "You are already well aware, my Lord," he said, "how I destroyed my ships when I first landed in your territory. And so now we have need of other ships in order to return to our own country. Wherefore, I should be obliged if you would give us workmen to cut and work the wood. I myself have ship-builders; and when the ships are built, we will take our departure. Inform your deities and your vassals of this." Montezuma assented. Cortes was provided with Mexican workmen who

Excuse of Cortes for delay.

were sent to Vera Cruz under Spanish officers, and the building of ships was commenced in earnest, though it is highly improbable that Cortes had the slightest intention of taking his departure in them.

It has been said that Cortes told Montezuma on this occasion that he would have to accompany the Spaniards in order to be presented to the King of Spain; but the whole course of the narrative contradicts this statement, and it would have been perfect madness in Cortes at this juncture to make Montezuma so desperate as such a threat would infallibly have made him. Cortes no doubt relied upon palliatives and delays, in the hope of receiving, in the meantime, succour from home. Throughout the interview, according to the accounts given of it by the two historians who ought to have known most, it is discernible that the tone of the Mexican king towards Cortes was altered from that which it had been. He is even reported to have said that it was not "words but deeds" that he wanted.* The Spanish soldiers

Montezuma's bearing towards Cortes changed.

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* "Dixo que le daria los carpinteros, y que luego despachasse; y no huviesse las palabras, sino obras."

appreciated the danger of their position, and went about much depressed (*muy pensativos*), and fully on their guard against any sudden attack. Indeed, this little body of men lived in their armour, and formed such habits of wariness, that years of peace and lordship could not efface the watchful customs which they had acquired at this eventful period of their lives, so that one of them afterwards describes how he could never pass a night in bed, but must get up, and walk about in the open air, and gaze at the stars.*

If such were the feelings of the common men, what must have been those of their commander? What agonies of sleepless indecision must have beset his couch, unless, indeed, he were composed of different material from that of other men? A slight disturbance in the street, a momentary out-

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—Cap. 108. And Gomara says that Cortes remarked the change:—"No le pareció, que le recibia con el talento que otras veces."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 94.

* "Y otra cosa digo, que no puedo dormir, sino un rato de la noche, que me tengo de levantar á ver el cielo y estrellas, y me he de passear un rato al sereno, y esto sin poner en la cabeça el bonete, ni paño, ni cosa ninguna."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 108.

break of fanaticism, a quarrel in the market-place between some Tlascalan and some Mexican—and the fires of discord, once aroused, might spread throughout the city, consume the little band of Spaniards and their allies, and prevent a great conquest from being fulfilled. Then would the name and fame of Cortes be no more than those of some of the early adventurers in discovery and conquest who fill up the trenches over which wiser or more fortunate men march to the accomplishment of great designs.

Danger of a sudden outbreak.

It was not, however, by any enemies in the city of Mexico that the fortunes of Cortes were next to be assailed. He had entered Mexico on the 8th of November, of the year 1519: it was now the beginning of May, 1520; and, in these few months, he had accomplished more than any conqueror, before him or after him, ever did with so small a force at his command. Meanwhile he had heard nothing from Cuba or from the mother country; and it was certain that whatever should come, either in the way of news or of supplies, would prove a considerable succour or a great hindrance. A few days after the unpleasant interview with Montezuma, above recorded, he

received intelligence of a most important and perplexing event; namely, that eighteen ships had arrived in the Bay of San Juan, not far from his little colony at Vera Cruz. The alarming news (alarming on account of the number of the vessels) was confirmed by a letter he received from a Spaniard whom he had appointed to watch that coast.* This slight circumstance affords a striking instance of the foresight of Cortes; and then the thoughtless exclaim, such persons are fortunate! Cortes instantly despatched messengers in different directions to gain further intelligence about these vessels. Fifteen days passed without any messenger returning—fifteen days of terrible anxiety for Cortes. At last Montezuma communicated to the Spanish General, that he was aware of the arrival of these new comers, and that they had disembarked in the port of San Juan. Moreover, the Monarch was able to show Cortes a picture of the forces that had disembarked, which

Unwelcome news for Cortes.

Landing of an armament on the coast of New Spain.

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* "Me trajo una Carta de un Español, que yo tenia puesto en la Costa, para que si Navíos veniessen, les diesse razon de mí, y de aquella Villa, que allí estaba cerca de aquel Puerto, porque no se perdiessen."—Lorenzana, p. 116.

consisted of eighty horses, eight hundred men, and ten or twelve cannon. The messengers who brought this news to Mexico added a piece of intelligence very significant of evil for Cortes; namely, that the messengers whom he had sent were with the newly-arrived strangers, and that the General would not let them come away.

There was now no excuse for Cortes to delay his return on account of the want of vessels, and so, it is said, Montezuma intimated; but it is probable that if the King felt any joy at this opportunity of getting rid of an enemy, or at least of a very importunate friend, he also had a terrible apprehension that the arrival of this additional force from Spain boded no good to himself. On the day when this intelligence was communicated, Montezuma and Cortes dined together, and were particularly gracious to each other; but dismay and apprehension waited unbidden at the board, and leavened alike the smiles of the timid Monarch and of the crafty General.*

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* I have no doubt, however, that, like most wise men, Cortes knew how to postpone his anxieties as much as possible; and that, whatever the delicate Indian King

Cortes sends Father Olmedo to the General of the armament.

Cortes lost no time in despatching Father Olmedo with a letter to his newly-arrived countrymen, in which he informed their General, whoever he might be, of what had happened since his own arrival in the country, of the towns he had gained and pacified, and of the treasures which he had in charge for the King of Spain. He then demanded on what authority this General came, and whether he were in need of anything? The good Father departed, and it is conjectured that he carried inducements of a very solid kind to be distributed amongst the subordinates of the General, in case he should prove intractable.

The armament was sent by Velazquez.

I do not doubt that the fears of Cortes predominated over his hopes. He had left too much hostility behind him, not to have great occasion for fear upon any arrival of his countrymen. His fears were justified. This formidable armament was sent by his former master, and now bitter

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might do, Cortes was sure to make a good dinner. His appetite, like that of most great men who exert their minds, was very vigorous.—"Fué mui gran comedor, í templado en el beber, teniendo abundancia."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 238. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. 2.

enemy, the Governor of Cuba. It originally consisted of nineteen ships, carrying fourteen hundred foot soldiers, eighty horsemen, twenty pieces of cannon, and a hundred and sixty muskets and cross-bows; but the Mexican painters were right in describing eighteen vessels only, for one had been lost at sea. This considerable force had been entrusted to a general of some experience, Pamphilo de Narvaez, and his instructions were to seize Cortes and his companions. The danger to Cortes was imminent.

Pamphilo de Narvaez its commander.

But Narvaez was quite another man from Cortes, and proceeded at once to such extremities, as probably to weaken his influence over his own men, and even to cause a protestation to be made from an important personage in the fleet, the Licentiate Ayllon, whom, however, he put into confinement and sent away. Narvaez sent a flattering message to Montezuma, telling him that he would release him, and that he came to seize upon Cortes. He also sought to gain the garrison at Vera Cruz, but they were true to their Commander. Not so the Cempoalans, in whose town Narvaez took up his quarters. They very naturally took part with the larger force;

His proceedings against Cortes.

and, as Cortes remarks, desired to be on the conquering side, being prepared to shout "Long life to whoever may be victorious."

Cortes quits Mexico to confront Narvaez.

It was time for Cortes to appear upon the scene of greatest danger. Accordingly, leaving Alvarado in command, and taking with him only seventy of his own men, Cortes commended those whom he left and his treasures to Montezuma's good offices, as to one who was a faithful vassal to the King of Spain.* This parting speech seems most audacious, but a plenary audacity was part of the wisdom of Cortes. At Cholula he came up with his lieutenant, Juan Velazquez and his men; joined company with them; and pushed on towards Cempoala. When he approached the town, he prepared to make an attack by night on the position which Narvaez occupied, and which was no other than the great temple of Cempoala. Cortes and his men knew the position well. Narvaez must, I think, have

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* "Que mirase, que él era Vasallo de Vuestra Alteza, y que agora habia de recibir mercedes de Vuestra Magestad por los Servicios, que le habia hecho."—LORENZANA, p. 123.

displaced the gods, for he occupied three or four of the towers of the temple. This distribution of his forces was fatal to him.

Nature of the attack on Narvaez.

On the other side the plan was, that sixty young men, chosen for their activity, should make themselves masters of the cannon; and then that Sandoval, one of the bravest lieutenants of Cortes, should make an attack upon the tower where Narvaez was to be found. Round this tower eighteen large cannon were placed, but so prompt was the attack, that though it did not find the enemy unprepared, there was not time to fire more than four of the guns, and for the most part the shots went over the heads of the attacking party. The artillery being thus disposed of, Sandoval succeeded in forcing his way up the tower, and capturing Narvaez. Meanwhile Cortes held the base; and the enemy, who do not seem to have been very willing or alert, and who supposed that their Commander had fallen, were mastered so speedily and so effectually, that Cortes had but three men killed and Narvaez but fifteen. During the action, the moon, as if she had been a partizan of Cortes and was weary of looking down upon the horrid sacri-

Narvaez defeated.

fices which he was endeavouring to put an end to, withdrew herself behind the clouds, and suffered the Narvaez faction, new to the land, to believe that certain luminous creatures (*cocayos*) were the glittering of numerous muskets in the hands of the Cortesians. No sooner, however, was the action decided, than she came forth in all her splendour, to illustrate and honour the victory.

In the encounter Narvaez lost an eye: he was afterwards sent as a prisoner to Vera Cruz. His men, not without resistance on the part of some of them, ultimately ranged themselves under the banner of Cortes; and thus was a great danger* turned into a welcome succour. Cortes received the conquered troops in the most winning manner, and created an enthusiasm in his favour. One of the soldiers of Narvaez, a negro and a comical fellow, danced and shouted for joy, crying,

Narvaez's men attach themselves to Cortes.

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* How great the danger was, may be appreciated by "the winning words full of promise" which Cortes uttered in his speech to the men previous to the attack. For those who have time to study history minutely, the speech is well worth referring to. It was made on horseback, and therefore was not long.—See BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 122.

"Where are the Romans who with such small numbers have ever achieved so great a victory?"

The first thought of Cortes was to divide his troops; for, as the vanquished far outnumbered the victors, some disturbance might easily occur, and the men of Narvaez could not yet be relied upon as firm adherents. Cortes accordingly employed two hundred Spaniards in founding a town at Coatzacualco, the same spot to which he had before sent an expedition. He also despatched two hundred men to Vera Cruz, where he had given orders that the vessels should be transported; and two hundred he sent to another place. His next care was to despatch a messenger to Mexico, to give an account of his victory, of which, at his suggestion, a painted representation* was sent to Montezuma by the Indians of Cempoala.

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* "Aviendo pintado en un Lienço lo que pasaba, á Narvaez herido, y aprisionado, la Gente rendida; á Cortes Victorioso, y apoderado de la Artillería."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. iv. cap. 66.

CHAPTER VII.

During the absence of Cortes the Mexicans rebel—Siege of the Spanish garrison—Cortes returns to Mexico.

Spanish garrison besieged by the Mexicans.

IN fourteen days after the defeat of Narvaez the messenger of Cortes returned to him, bringing from Alvarado the unexpected and unwelcome intelligence, that the Spanish garrison in Mexico were besieged by the citizens, and were in the utmost peril; and that the Indians had set fire to the Spanish quarters in many places, and undermined them. Much of the provisions, he added, had been taken by the enemy; the four brigantines had been burnt; and, although the combat had ceased, the Spaniards were in a state of siege. Finally, Alvarado implored Cortes, for the love of God, to lose no time in succouring them. The causes of this outbreak

furnish a curious illustration of Mexican habits and practices, and require to be told at some length.

It is seldom that the religion of a people is so intimately connected with its warfare as to form part of the same story, but in the case of the Mexicans, transactions of the highest military importance grew out of the proceedings at religious festivals. This is a felicity for the narrative, as it takes these religious ceremonies, which constituted so large a part of the life of the people, out of the list of mere description of manners and political customs, and brings them naturally into the course of events.

The month Toxcatl, in which Cortes was absent from Mexico, was the especial month devoted to religious services. It corresponded nearly with the period of Easter; "as if," says the pious monk* from whom we learn these particulars, "the Devil wished to imitate the Christian festival of Easter in order to forget or dissemble the grief which the Christian commemoration caused him."

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* Torquemada, "Monarquía Indiana."

Great festival to Tezcatlipuk.

The Mexican divinity who was chiefly honoured in this month was Tezcatlipuk, and the mode of honouring him was as follows. Ten days before the chief day of the festival, a priest sallied forth from the temple, clad after the fashion of the idol, with flowers in his hand, and with a little flute made of clay, of a very shrill pitch. This priest, having turned first to the east, sounded his flute; then he turned to the west, and did the same thing; then to the north, and then to the south. Having thus signified that he called upon the attention of all mankind, and required them to celebrate worthily this festival, he remained in silence for a time. Then he placed his hand on the ground, and taking some earth in it, put it in his mouth and ate it, as a token of humility and adoration. All who heard him did the same thing; and, with the most energetic demonstrations of grief and entreaty, implored the obscurity of night and the wind not to desert them nor forget them, but to deliver them immediately from the troubles of life, and carry them to the place of rest,* "as if," adds the indignant monk, "the

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* "Invocando á la obscuridad de la noche, y al viento (ceremonia propria de Gentiles, como leemos averlo hecho

accursed one could give that which in truth he does not possess for himself."

At the sound of this little flute, which seems as if it represented for them the "still small voice" of conscience, all sinners became very sorrowful and much afraid; and during the ten days that this lasted, their constant prayer to Tezcatlipuk was, that their faults should be hidden from the eyes and the knowledge of men, and pardoned by his gracious clemency.* There is a strange wisdom sometimes in these barbarous rites; and here we have an instance of that just fear of the intolerance of his fellow-man (who, moreover, is obliged to pretend to be worse in this respect than he is) which leads the sinner to confide in God, and to fear his fellow-creatures.

At the sound of the flute sinners became sorrowful.

Every day this ceremony of the flute was con-

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aquella Reina de Cartago, en la celebracion de su muerte, y Sacrificio) y rogábanles con ahinco, que no los desamparasen, ni olvidasen, ó que los librasen presto de los trabajos de la Vida, y los llevasen al lugar del descanso."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. x. cap. 14.

* "No pedian otra cosa á este Dios, sino que fuesen sus delitos ocultos de los ojos, y sabiduría de los Hombres, y perdonados de su misericordia, y clemencia."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. x. cap. 14.

tinued, and every day there were similar manifestations of sorrow and penitence, "although," as the monk remarks, with but a shallow reading of the heart of man (for there may be all the anguish of remorse for sin without a thought of the penalty), "this grief of theirs was only for corporal punishment which their gods gave them, and not for eternal punishment, for they did not believe that in another life there was a punishment so strict as the Faith teaches us; which, if they had believed, so many of them would not have offered themselves so willingly to death as they did offer themselves, but would have been afraid of the torments which they have to endure for ever."* This remark (of the readiness of the Mexicans to encounter death) is well worthy of notice, as it tends a little to exculpate their practice of human sacrifice; and one is glad, for the sake of human

Readiness of Mexicans to die.

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* "Aunque este dolor de ellos, no era sino por la pena corporal, que les daban, y no por la eterna, por no tener creído que en la otra vida huviese pena tan estrecha, como nos la enseña la Fé: que á creerlo, no se ofrecieran tantos de su voluntad á la muerte, como se ofrecian, con temor de los tormentos, que avian de pasar perdurablemente."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. x. cap. 14.

nature, to find anything which tends to explain that form of atrocity.

New vestments for Tezcatlipuk.

The ten days having thus passed, the eve before the festival arrived, when the Mexican lords brought new vestments for the idol, and adorned him with feathers, bracelets, and other ornaments, the old ones being put away in a chest, and much honoured. Then the priests drew aside the curtain which was at the entrance of the chapel where the idol stood, and showed it to the assembled people. After this, a priest of great authority came forth with roses in his hand and sounded the little flute with the same ceremony as on the preceding days.

On the ensuing morning, the great day of the festival having now come, the priests brought out a splendid litter, put the idol upon it; and, taking the burden upon their shoulders, carried it down to the foot of the steps of the great temple. Then came all the youths and maidens who were devoted to the service of the temple, bearing a thick rope made of strings of roasted maize, with which they performed a circuit round the litter. This

The main object of the festival.

rope was called after the month Toxcatl, and was a symbol of sterility (Toxcatl meaning a "dry thing"); and the whole drift of the ceremony was to implore Tezcatlipuk, their Jupiter, to give them gracious rain from heaven.

They placed a similar string of maize upon the neck of the idol, and a garland of the same material upon his head. All the youths and maidens were beautifully dressed, and were adorned with garlands of maize. The chief men of the city wore ornaments of the same kind, having these garlands on their heads and necks, and in their hands nosegays of the same material very curiously constructed.*

Everywhere, upon the ground, were scattered the thorns of the aloe, in order that devout people might shed their blood in honour of the day.

Then commenced a grand procession, the idol being carried in front, with two priests continually incensing it; and, as they threw the incense on high, they prayed that their petitions

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* "Y en las manos Ramilletes de lo mismo, que son de grande ingenio, y curiosidad."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. x. cap. 14.

might go up to heaven like as the smoke ascended.

So far all was innocent enough; but now came the saddest and strangest part of the ceremony. For a year previous to the day of festival, a youth had been chosen, the most beautiful and graceful amongst the captives, who was called the Image of Tezcatlipuk. The youth was instructed in all the arts of gracious courtesy;* and, as he passed along the street, beautifully adorned, and accompanied by the greatest personages, all who met him fell on their knees before him and adored him, while he responded with graciousness to their adorations.

Choice of a victim.

Twenty days before this Festival they gave him four wives, and taking off the robes which he had worn in imitation of their god, Tezcatlipuk, they clothed him in the handsomest dresses that a man amongst the Mexicans could wear.

For these twenty days he lived in all joy and felicity with his wives, and if there were any

His transient felicity.

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* "Le enseñaban todo primor, y suma cortesía en el hablar."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. x. cap. 14.

satirists in Mexico, it is probable that they pronounced these marriages to be the happiest ever known in that beautiful Venice of the western world; but if happy, a dreadful happiness it must have been. The five days before the Festival were spent in festivities in honour of the victim, at which all the Mexican court were his companions, save the King himself, who alone stood apart, and kept his state.*

But those days of fierce and transient felicity were now over; the procession was ended; then came a banquet; which also being concluded, the great event of the day took place. The poor youth came forward on the summit of the temple, and made a dignified bow to the assembled people, resuming his representation of the majesty of Tezcatlipuk. Behind him stalked five murdering ministers of sacrifice, who threw

The sacrifice.

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* "Cinco dias ántes que muriese hacíanle Fiesta, y Banquetes, en lugares frescos, y deleitosos, en los quales Dias le acompañaban con mas concurso los Señores, y Principales, y casi toda la Corte, sino era el Rei, y Señor Supremo, que este, guardando su Autoridad, no le acompanaba."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. x. cap. 14.

him upon the fatal stone, when the chief priest came forward with great reverence, opened the breast of the victim, and took out the heart.* The priests were wont to hurl down from the temple the bodies of the persons sacrificed, but on this occasion they carried the body down with much submission and reverence to the last step of the temple. It was then beheaded; and, according to the narrative, the body, as some sacred thing, was cooked and divided amongst the Mexican lords.

Conclusion of festival.

Lastly, there was a solemn dance in which the youths dedicated to Tezcatlipuk took a part. The great lords joined in this dance,† and thus the Festival was ended.

In ordinary years this poor devoted youth was the only person sacrificed; but every fourth year,

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* "Llegaba el Summo Sacerdote con grande reverencia, y abríale el pecho, y sacaba el coraçon, y hacia con él la ceremonia acostumbrada."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. x. cap. 14.

† It is to be noted that this dance was celebrated in a place set apart for that purpose, ("En un lugar particular, y consagrado para este proposito"—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. x. cap. 14), and apparently not in the great court of the temple.

which was considered a year of jubilee, several persons were added to the sacrifice.*

Such were the ceremonies, partly graceful but mostly horrible, which took place every year in the month of Toxcatl, and for leave to celebrate which the Mexican lords asked permission from

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* It is not very important to settle which of two false gods was the one whose day of festival was chosen by Alvarado for his attack upon the Mexican nobles. Some of the best authorities represent this transaction to have occurred on the festival of Huitzilopochtli, the Mexican god of war. But they may have been deceived by following Fr. Bernardino de Sahagun, whose accuracy, as regards any historical fact is not to be relied upon, and who, in the next sentence, makes a statement which is totally contrary to fact. "Motezuzoma mandó que se hiciese esta fiesta para dar contento á los Españoles."—*Hist. Universal de las cosas de Nueva-España.* KINGSBOROUGH, *Collection*, vol. vii. cap. 19.

Nearly the whole of the month of Toxcatl was devoted to religious festivals. The greatest festival, however, in the month, and the one that came first, was that in honour of Tezcatlipuk; and it seems to me almost inconceivable that Alvarado should have allowed this festival to be celebrated (in which there were large assemblages of people), and then that the Mexicans should have had occasion to ask permission for the holding of

Pedro de Alvarado, who, in the absence of Cortes, was the chief in command, and who had been called by the Mexicans "Tonatiuh," "the sun-faced man," as he was of a ruddy complexion.

The Mexicans ask permission of Alvarado to celebrate a festival.

Now Alvarado was a determined, rather than a wise man, and he was at present placed in very difficult circumstances, requiring both wisdom and forbearance. There can be no doubt that the

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the second festival. The Mexican historian, Ixtlilxochitl, merely describes the festival under the general head of Toxcatl, ("Pendant que Cortes était à la Vera Cruz, les Mexicains célébrèrent une de leurs principales fêtes nommée *Toxcatl*, qui tombait le jour de Pâques."—*Hist. des Chichimèques*, cap. 88. TERNAUX-COMPANS, *Voyages*) which would correspond better to the festival of the Mexican Jupiter (Tezcatlipuk) than to that of the Mexican Mars. See TORQUEMADA, lib. x. cap. 14.

In whatever way the question may be settled, and an alarming amount of learning might be expended upon it, I have preferred giving an account of the rites of the Mexican Jupiter in preference to those of the Mexican Mars, as the former are more curious and more significant.

In both cases there was a victim, a procession, and a solemn dance. The victim, however, in Jupiter's festival, was adored as a god during his year of preparation, while the victim to the god of war did not meet with that extraordinary honour.

Mexicans must have exhibited a changed bearing towards the Spaniards since the time of their arrival, and especially since the departure of Cortes. The Mexicans had found out that the Spaniards were mortal; they had discovered that horses were but animals; they had ascertained by the coming of Narvaez that the Spaniards were not united. Their wrongs were manifest. They saw the Spaniards grow richer day by day. They probably discerned that the offer of Cortes to quit the country was a mere pretence. But that which was the indignity of indignities in their eyes was the deposition of their deities, and the elevation of what they would consider as the Spanish gods.

Sentiments of the Mexicans at this period.

All these feelings would be more likely to be manifested, as the numbers of the Spaniards were diminished by the departure of the troop which accompanied Cortes; and it was a few days after that event that some of the Spaniards began to discern or to imagine, that the Indians did not show them that respect and veneration which they had been accustomed to receive.* In truth, no respect or love can fulfil

* "Pasados pocos Dias, empeçaron á notar algunos

the requirements of fear; but I think that in this case, it was a just fear, and that revolt, if not already resolved upon, was imminent. The historian Herrera says that many Indian women declared to the truth of this conspiracy, and "that from women the truth is always learnt."* I do not know how that may be, but it is clear that throughout the conquest of America the Indian women several times betrayed their country under circumstances which do not seem to me to indicate so much a love of truth as a love of what is personal and near, and an indifference to what is abstract and remote,—a disposition which has been noted equally of all women in all countries. In a word, they loved their Spanish lovers, and did not care much about their country; and, accordingly, on several critical occasions, betrayed

Indian women betray the secrets of their countrymen.

Españoles, que los Indios no les tenian el respeto, y veneracion, á que estaban acostumbrados, ántes de salir Cortés de Mexico."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. iv. cap. 66.

* "Pero la verdad fué, que pensaron matar los Castellanos, para lo qual tenian sus armas escondidas en las casas, cerca del templo; y esto afirmaron muchas mugeras, de las quales se sabia siempre la verdad."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. II. lib. x. cap. 8.

the one to the other with a recklessness which would be inexcusable in the other sex, but which is to be accounted for, as above, in them. If there had been Spanish women in the invading armies, the Indians might have had a chance of learning something from them; but, as it was, the betrayal was necessarily all on one side.

The hereditary enemies of Mexico, the Tlascalans, no doubt, did what they could to deepen the impressions made on the Spaniards by the changed demeanour of the Mexicans. They were at hand to magnify every ill report, and to counsel any act of violence.

Alvarado's policy.

Alvarado resolved to strike a great blow; and mindful, perhaps, of the proverb, "He who attacks conquers" (*Quien acomete vence*),* resolved to take advantage of the Tezcatlipuk Festival, to surprise and slay a great number of the Mexican nobility. It is quite probable that this Festival was looked upon by the Spanish Commander with great suspicion, and even that the demeanour of the Indians during the early days of the Festival (which of course was not explained till long

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* See BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 125.

after by the researches of learned men) served to increase the Spanish suspicions.

I have no doubt that the horrid sacrifices in use among the Mexicans had made a deep impression on the Spanish soldiers; and that many a brave man, who would have faced death with unconcerned gallantry in the battle field, had an extreme dread of being offered up as a sacrifice to the idols with the unpronounceable names. We may be sure that alarming rumours, which have even found their way into grave history, were loudly current then amongst the soldiers,—such as that the Indian women had their cooking vessels ready to boil the bodies of the Spaniards in.* In the affairs of life, what is said and what is thought are almost of more importance than what is done. Most histories are too wise, concerning themselves too much with what really happened, and not taking heed enough of the wild reports and rumours which were nearly as good as facts for the time they were believed in.

The current reports of the day a great part of history.

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* "Indias tenian prevenidas, que cuidaban de Ollas, llenas de su Brevage, para cocer á los Castellanos, y comérselos."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. iv. cap. 66.

Alvarado attacks the Mexicans at the festival.

It is, therefore, no matter of surprise to hear that when the sacred dance,* above described as the closing ceremony of the feast to the Mexican Jupiter, was being celebrated, Alvarado's troops made an onslaught upon the weaponless Mexican lords, and slew no less than six hundred of them. This atrocity, as might have been expected, was the signal for an instant outbreak on the part of the populace. Alvarado was not skilled, like his master Cortes, in the art of creating and maintaining terror; but, indeed, the slightest knowledge of the world might have told him, that such a wholesale massacre, destroying the chief men, and, therefore, the restraining power over the Mexican populace, would, so far from quelling revolt, be likely to give it ample breathing room. The little garrison of Spaniards, instead of being masters of the town, were instantly in the condition of a distressed and besieged party, and it would have gone very hard with them, if

The populace rise.

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* Some authors have supposed that this dance was the one which they called Macevaliztli, which means "reward with labour" (merecimiento con trabajo). See Gomara, *Crónica de Nueva-España*, cap. 104. Barcia, *Historiadores*, tom. ii.

Montezuma had not endeavoured to make his furious subjects desist from the attack.* Montezuma interferes.

Such was the disastrous state of things communicated to Cortes in return for the tidings which he had sent to Mexico of his victory. Indeed, the life of Cortes was like a buoyant substance borne on a tumultuous sea: however, if it descended from the crest of one wave to the hollow of another, it did not remain depressed, but mounted up again; and, when the bystander turned to look, it was perhaps on the summit of a still higher and mightier wave than before. As may be imagined, he lost no time in seeking to repair the evils which had befallen the Spanish arms in Mexico. He recalled the expeditions which he had sent out; he addressed the former followers of Narvaez, showing them that here was an opportunity for service both honourable and lucrative; and, the instant necessity for action Cortes collects his forces.

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* This is confirmed by three distinct authorities, each of great weight: Bernal Diaz, cap. 125; Ixtlilxochitl, *Histoire de Chichimèques*, part ii. cap. 88; Ternaux-Compans, *Voyages*, and Cortes himself, Lorenzana, p. 131.

being an immediate bond of union amongst brave men,* he forthwith commenced his march for the capital. At Tlascala, all was friendly to him; he there reviewed his men, and found that they amounted to thirteen hundred soldiers, amongst whom were ninety-six horsemen, eighty cross-bowmen, and about eighty musketeers.† Cortes marched with great strides to Mexico, and entered the city at the head of this formidable force on the 24th of June, 1520, the day of John the Baptist.

Marches rapidly to Mexico, June, 1520.

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* "En esta tan urgente necesidad, Amigos, y no Amigos, con gran voluntad se le ofrecieron, y se armaron los que no lo estaban."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. iv. c. 67.

† Accounts vary very much about the number of these forces; the one adopted here is from Bernal Diaz.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Reception of Cortes in Mexico—General attack upon the Spanish Quarters—Flight from Mexico to Tlacuba—Battle of Otumba—Cortes returns to Tlascala.

VERY different was the reception of Cortes on this occasion from that on his first entry into Mexico, when Montezuma had gone forth with all pomp to meet him. Now the Indians stood silently in the doorways of their houses, and the bridges between the houses were taken up.* Even when he arrived at his own quarters, he found the gates barred, so strict had been the siege; and he had to demand an entry. Alvarado appeared upon the battlements, and asked

Cortes' reception.

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* "Veiron las puentes de unas casas á otras, quitadas, y otras malas señales."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, tom. II. dec. ii. lib. x. cap. 8.

if Cortes came in the same liberty with which he went out, and if he was still their General. Cortes replied "Yes," that he came with victory, and with increased forces. The gates were then opened, and Cortes and his companions entered. He had to hear the excuses of Alvarado for conduct which a prudent man like Cortes must have disapproved, but which he did not dare to punish then. His aspect was gloomy, and one who must have seen him that day, describes him by an epithet which, in the original meaning, was exceedingly applicable. Bernal Diaz says that Cortes was *mohino*, an adjective which is applied to one who plays in a game against many others.

The alternation of success and disappointment seems for once to have tried the equal temper and patient mind of the Spanish General. He sent a cold, or an uncourteous, message to Montezuma, the foolishness of which he seems afterwards to have been well aware of, and, with the candour of a great man about his own errors, to have acknowledged.*

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* "Muchos han dicho, aver oydo dezir a Hernando Cortés, que si en llegando visitara á Motezuma, sus cosas

At the moment, however, Cortes could give but little attention to anything save the pressing wants of the garrison. He lodged his own men in their old quarters, and placed in the great temple the additional forces he had brought with him. The next morning he sent out a messenger to Vera Cruz, probably with a view to ascertain how he would be received in the streets of Mexico; but not more than half an hour elapsed before the messenger returned, being wounded, and crying out that all the citizens were in revolt, and that the drawbridges were raised.

Cortes sends out a messenger to Vera Cruz,

Who is driven back.

Before Cortes despatched this messenger, he had sent a threatening message to Montezuma, desiring him to give orders for the attendance of the people in the market-place, in order that the Spaniards might be able to buy provisions. Montezuma's reply was, that he and the greater part of his servants were prisoners, and that Cortes should set free and send out whomsoever he wished to entrust with the execution

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passaran bien: y que lo dexó estimándole en poco, por hallarse tan poderoso."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. II. lib. x. cap. 8.

of the necessary orders. Cortes chose for this purpose Montezuma's brother, the Lord of Iztapalapa; but when that Prince came among the citizens, his message was not listened to, and he was not permitted by the people to return, but was chosen as their leader.

Montezuma's brother chosen by the citizens as their leader.

After the return of the messenger whom Cortes had sent out to Vera Cruz, the Mexicans advanced in great numbers towards the Spanish quarters, and commenced an attack upon them. Cortes, who was not given to exaggeration of statement, says that neither the streets nor the terraced roofs (*azoteas*) were visible, being entirely obscured by the people who were upon them; that the multitude of stones was so great, that it seemed as if it rained stones; and that the arrows came so thickly, that the walls and the courts were full of them, rendering it difficult to move about. Cortes made two or three desperate sallies, and was wounded. The Mexicans succeeded in setting fire to the fortress, which was with difficulty subdued, and they would have scaled the walls at the point where the fire had done most damage, but for a large force of cross-bowmen, musketeers, and artillery, which Cortes threw forward to meet the

The Mexicans attack the garrison.

danger. The Mexicans at last drew back, leaving no fewer than eighty Spaniards wounded in this first encounter.

The ensuing morning, as soon as it was daylight, the attack was renewed. There was no occasion for the artillerymen to take any particular aim, for the Mexicans advanced in such dense masses, that they could not be missed.* The gaps made in these masses were instantly filled up again; and practised veterans in the Spanish army, who had served in Italy, in France, and against the grand Turk, declared that they had never seen men close up their ranks as these Mexicans did after the discharges of artillery upon them.† Again, and with considerable success,

Distinguished bravery of the Mexican troops.

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* "Los Artilleros no tenian necesidad de puntería, sino asestar en los Esquadrones de los Indios."—Lorenzana, p. 135.

† "Porque unos tres ó quatro soldados que se avian hallado en Italia, que allí estavan con nosotros, juraron muchas vezes á Dios, que guerras tan bravosas jamas avian visto en algunas que se avian hallado entre Christianos, y contra la artillería del Rey de Francia, ni del gran Turco; ni gente, como aquellos Indios, con tanto ánimo cerrar los esquadrones vieron."—Bernal Diaz, cap. 126.

Cortes made sallies from the fortress in the course of the day; but at the end of it there were about sixty more of his men to be added to the list of wounded, already large, from the injuries received on the preceding day.

Cortes constructs moveable fortresses.

The third day was devoted by the ingenious Cortes to constructing three moveable fortresses, called *mantas*, which, he thought, would enable his men, with less danger, to contend against the Mexicans on their terraced roofs.* Each of these little fortresses afforded shelter for twenty persons; and was manned with cross-bowmen, musketeers, pike-men, and labourers who carried pick-axes and bars of iron for piercing through the houses, and destroying the barricades in the streets. As may be imagined, the besiegers did not look on idly, and the combat did not cease while these machines were being made.

Montezuma comes forth to address the people.

It was on this day that the unfortunate Montezuma, either at the request of Cortes, or of his own accord, came out upon a battlement, and addressed the people. He was surrounded by

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* A private house in Mexico was often a little fortress in itself, and could not easily be destroyed.

Spanish soldiers, and was at first received with all respect and honour by his people. When silence ensued, he addressed them in very loving words, bidding them discontinue the attack, and assuring them that the Spaniards would depart from Mexico. It is not probable that much of his discourse could have been heard by the raging multitude. But, on the other hand, he was able to hear what their leaders had to say, as four of the chiefs approached near to him, and with tears addressed him, declaring their grief at his imprisonment. They told him that they had chosen his brother as their leader, that they had vowed to their gods not to cease fighting until the Spaniards were all destroyed, and that each day they prayed to their gods to keep him free and harmless. They added, that when their designs were accomplished, he should be much more their lord than heretofore, and that he should then pardon them. Amongst the crowd, however, were, doubtless, men who viewed the conduct of Montezuma with intense disgust, or who thought that they had already shown too much disrespect towards him ever to be pardoned. A shower of stones and arrows interrupted the parley; the

Speech of four of his lords.

He is wounded.

Spanish soldiers had ceased for the moment to protect Montezuma with their shields; and he was severely wounded in the head and in two other places. The miserable Monarch was borne away, having received his death-stroke, but whether it came from the wounds themselves, or from the indignity of being thus treated by his people, remains a doubtful point. It seems, however, that, to use some emphatic words which have been employed upon a similar occasion,

He dies.

"He turned his face to the wall and would be troubled no more."

It is remarkable that he did not die a Christian,* and I think this shows that he had more

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* I am not ignorant that it has been asserted that Montezuma received the rite of baptism at the hands of his Christian captors.—See Bustamante's notes on Chimalpain's Translation of Gomara (*Historia de las Conquistas de Hernando Cortés.* Carlos Maria de Bustamante. Mexico, 1826, p. 287.) But the objections raised by Torquemada—the silence of some of the best authorities, such as Oviedo, Ixtlilxochitl, "Histoire des Chichimèques," and of Cortes himself; and, on the other hand, the distinctly opposing testimony of Bernal Diaz (see cap. 127), and the statement of Herrera, who asserts that Montezuma, at the hour of his death, refused to

force of mind and purpose than the world has generally been inclined to give him credit for. To read Montezuma's character rightly, at this distance of time, and amidst such a wild perplexity of facts, would be very difficult, and is not very important. But one thing, I think, is discernible, and that is, that his manners were very gracious and graceful. I dwell upon this, because, I conceive, it was a characteristic of the race; and no one will estimate this characteristic lightly, who has observed how very rare, even in the centres of civilized life, it is to find people of fine manners, so that in great capitals but very few persons can be pointed out, who are at all transcendent in this respect. The gracious delight which Montezuma had in giving was particularly noticeable;* and the impression which

His grand politeness.

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quit the religion of his fathers ("No se queria apartar de la Religion de sus Padres."—*Hist. de las Indias*, dec. II. lib. x. cap. 10), convince me that no such baptism took place.

* "Fué dadivoso, i mui franco con Españoles, í creo que tambien con los suios, cá si fuera Arte, y no por Natura, facilmente se le conociera al dár en el semblante, que los que dan de mala gana, mucho descubren el cara-

he made upon Bernal Diaz may be seen in the narrative of this simple soldier, who never speaks of him otherwise than as "the great Montezuma," and, upon the occasion of his death, remarks that some of the Spanish soldiers who had known him mourned for him, as if he had been a father, "and no wonder," he adds, "seeing that he was so good."* Cortes sent out the body to the new King, and Montezuma was mourned over by the Spaniards, to whom he had always been gracious, and probably by his own people; but little could be learnt of what the Mexicans thought, or did, upon the occasion, by the Spaniards, who only saw that Montezuma's death made no difference in the fierceness of the enemy's attack.

On the day when Montezuma addressed the people, Cortes held a conference with some of the opposing chiefs, who declared that the only basis on which they would treat, was that the

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çon."—GOMARA, *Cronica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 107. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. ii.

* "É hombres huvo entre nosotros de los que le conociamos y tratavamos, que tan llorado fué, como si fuera nuestro padre: y no nos hemos de maravillar dello, viendo que tan bueno era."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 126.

Spaniards should quit the city; otherwise, they said, they themselves would all have to die, or to put an end to the Spaniards. Such a basis of peace not being at all acceptable to Cortes, he next tried the effect of the *mantas*. These were advanced against the walls of some of the *azoteas*, being well supported from behind by four cannon, by a party of Spanish cross-bowmen and common soldiers, and by three thousand of the Tlascalan allies. But all their efforts were without avail. As for the cavalry, it could do nothing, as the horses could not keep their footing for a moment on the polished tesselated pavement. Indeed, the numbers and the vigour of the enemy were so great, that the Spaniards could not gain a single step; finally, they were obliged to give way, and the Indians occupied the square of the temple. There, five hundred of the principal persons, as they appeared to Cortes, posted themselves on the summit of the great temple: they were well-provisioned; and, being close to the fortress, could do it much harm. The Spaniards made two or three attempts to take this position, but were driven back each time, and some were wounded. Cortes saw that it would be necessary

Desperate resolve of the Mexicans.

A body of Mexicans occupy the summit of the great temple.

for him to make the attempt in person; and, accordingly, though wounded, he resolved to do so. He had his shield bound on to his arm (the wound being in the left hand), and having placed some of his troops at the base of the temple, he commenced the difficult ascent. The Spaniards succeeded in gaining the summit, and, after a terrible combat, in dislodging the Mexicans from that height, and driving them down upon the lower terraces. Then might be seen, flitting about the contest, like some obscene and hideous birds of prey, the priests of the temple, with their long black veils streaming in the wind,—the blood flowing from their clotted hair and lacerated ears, as on a day of sacrifice,—now transported by wrath at the desecration of their shrines, now animated by the expectation of fresh victims, and throughout supported in their ecstasy by the hope of some great manifestation on the part of their false deities. But the Mexican god of war could not, even at this critical period of his and their existence, instruct his worshippers how to hurl down, at the right inclination, the large beams which they had carried up to the temple, and which, if justly aimed, would have fatally discon-

Cortes dislodges the enemy from the temple.

certed the Spanish attack. The fight, which must have been one of the most picturesque on record, lasted three hours; and, to use the words of Bernal Diaz, "Cortes there showed himself to be a very valiant man, as he always was."* The Spaniards lost forty men; but they succeeded in

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* "Aquí se mostró Cortés mui varon, como síempre lo fué."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 126. De Solis says that two patriotic Mexicans approached Cortes in an attitude of supplication, and then sprang upon him, and endeavoured to throw themselves downwards from the temple with him; but that Cortes burst from them and saved himself, while they were dashed to pieces on the pavement of the court-yard below. Upon this story Clavigero remarks, "The very humane gentlemen Raynal and Robertson, moved to pity, as it appears, by the peril of Cortes (Gli umanissimi Signori Raynal, e Robertson mossi a pietà, per quanto appare, pel pericolo de Cortès), have provided some kind of unknown battlements and iron rails, by which he saved himself until he got clear of the Mexicans; but neither did the Mexicans ever make iron rails, nor had that temple any battlements. It is wonderful that these authors, so incredulous concerning what is attested by the Spanish and Indian writers, should yet believe what is neither to be found among the ancient authors, nor probable in itself." —See CLAVIGERO, *Storia Antica del Messico*, tom. iii. lib. ix. p. 128; see also the English Translation, vol. ii. p. 108.

putting every one of the Mexicans to the sword. We learn from the account of this battle something of the form of the temple. It appears that there were three or four terraces of some width, besides the main platform at the top.* Some of the Mexicans were hurled from the top of the temple to the bottom; others, again, as above described, were dislodged, and made a second stand upon one of these terraces. The difficulty of gaining the little tower, where the idols stood, was so great, that Cortes looks upon his success as owing to a special interposition of Providence.† The idols, it appears, had been reinstated; but the triumph of Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipuk was but of short duration; for Cortes set fire to these hideous images, and to the tower in which they

Form of the temple.

Cortes sets fire to the idols.

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* "Arriba peleámos con ellos tanto, que les fué forzado saltar de ella abajo á unas azoteas, que tenia al derredor, tan anchas como un paso. É de estas tenia la dicha Torre, tres, ó quatro, tan altas la una de la otra como tres estados."—LORENZANA, p. 138.

† "Y crea Vuestra Sacra Magestad, que fué tanto ganalles esta Torre, que si Dios no les quebrara las alâs, bastaban veinte de ellos para resistir la subida á mil Hombres, como quiera que pelearon muy valientemente, hasta que murieron."—LORENZANA, p. 139.

had their abode. Certainly, the great temple was a place of ill-omen for the Mexicans to fight upon; and the blood of slaughtered thousands might well rise up to testify against them on that day.

This fight in the temple gave a momentary gleam of success to the arms of the Spaniards, and afforded Cortes an opportunity to resume negotiations. But the determination of the Mexicans was fixed and complete. It was in vain that the Spanish General pressed them to consider the havoc which he daily made amongst their citizens, and the injury he was doing to their beautiful city. They replied, that they were well aware of the mischief which the Spaniards were doing, and of the slaughter they were causing amongst the Mexican people; but, nevertheless, they were determined that they would all perish, if that were needful, to gain their point of destroying the Spaniards. They bade Cortes look at the streets, the squares, and the terraces, covered with people; and then, in a business-like and calculating manner, they told him that if twenty-five thousand of them were to die for each Spaniard,

Determination of the Mexicans.

They calculate the relative value of a Spaniard's life.

still the Spaniards would perish first.* They urged triumphantly that all the causeways were destroyed, and that the Spaniards had few provisions left, and very little water, so that they would die of hunger and thirst, if from nothing else. "In truth," says Cortes, "they had much reason in what they said, for if we had no other enemy to fight against but hunger, it was sufficient to destroy us all in a short time."

The conference ended in a discouraging manner for the Spaniards; but Cortes revived the spirits of himself and his men by a sally which he made at nightfall, and in which the Spaniards succeeded in burning more than three hundred houses. This, however, did but little good, as it only rendered three hundred families desperate.

The Mexicans had exaggerated the damage, when they spoke of all the causeways being destroyed. The one to Tlacuba, though much injured, still remained. Indeed, in the course of

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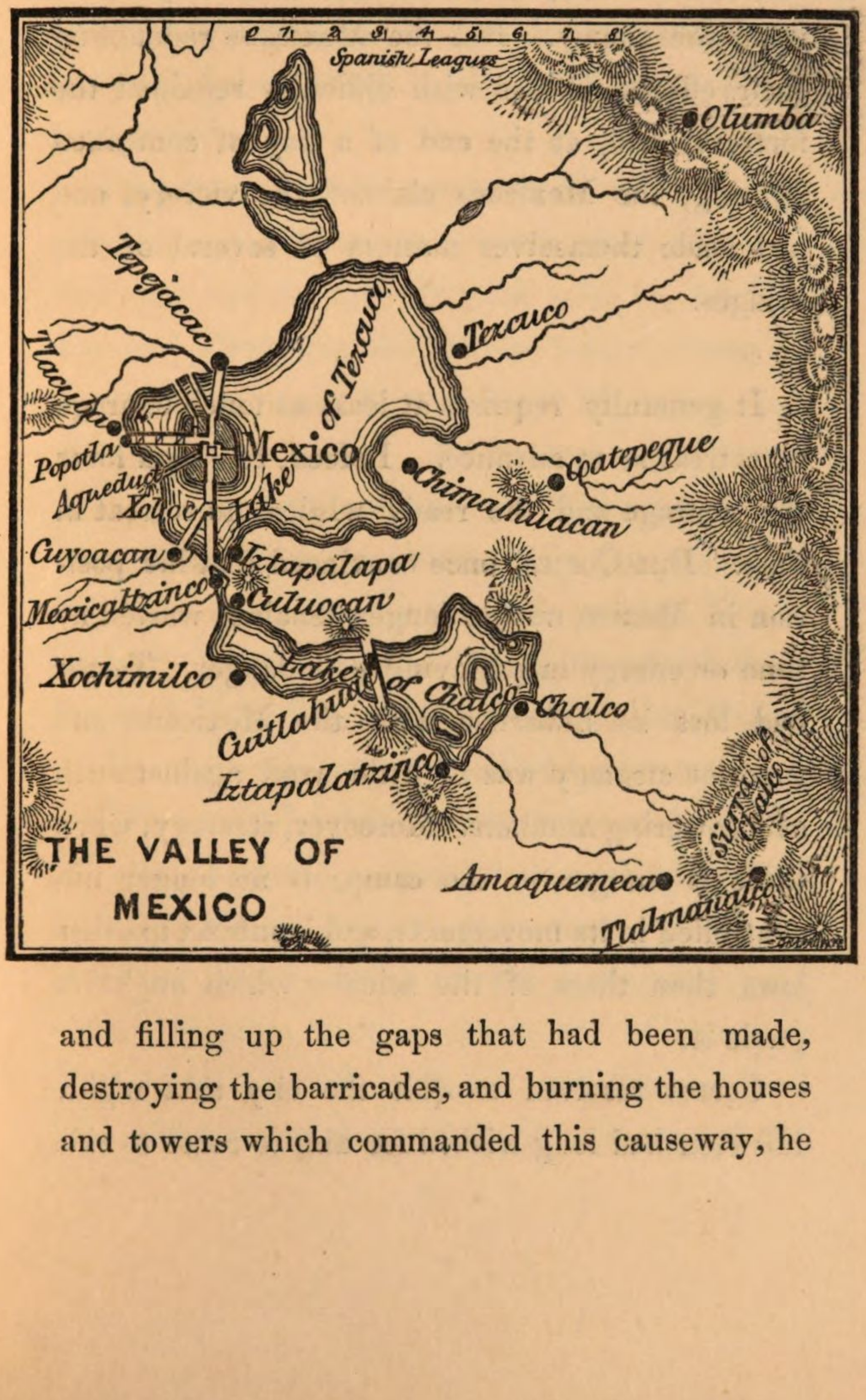
* "Que á morir veinte y cinco mil de ellos, y uno de los nuestros, nos acabariamos nosotros primero."—LORENZANA, p. 139.

the next day, when Cortes turned his whole attention in that direction, securing the bridges,



and filling up the gaps that had been made, destroying the barricades, and burning the houses and towers which commanded this causeway, he

succeeded in making it passable for that day; and with some of his men, absolutely did reach the terra firma, in a charge that they made upon the enemy. But the Mexicans redoubling their efforts, Cortes with difficulty regained the fortress; and, at the end of a day of continued fighting, the Mexicans claimed the victory, and had made themselves masters of several of the bridges.

It generally requires at least as much courage to retreat as to advance. Indeed, few men have the courage and the ready wisdom to retreat in time. But Cortes, once convinced that his position in Mexico was no longer tenable, wasted no time or energy in parleying with danger. Terror had lost its influence with the Mexicans, and superior strategy was of little avail against such overpowering numbers. Moreover, strategy, when there is hunger in the camp, is no longer uncontrolled in its movements, and is subject to other laws than those of the science which ought to guide it.

Cortes resolves to quit Mexico.

Cortes resolved to quit the city that night. His men had long wished for him to come to this

conclusion; and an astrologer of the name of Botello, of whom it was said that he had a familiar spirit, had discovered by his divinations, and declared four nights before, that if they did not depart on that very night, no one of them would escape alive.

Preparations for departure.

Preparations for departure were instantly commenced. A pontoon was constructed of wood, and intrusted to fifty Spanish soldiers and four hundred Tlascalans, the Spanish soldiers being all chosen men, bound by an oath to die rather than desert their pontoon. To convey the artillery, fifty Spanish soldiers and two hundred and fifty Tlascalans were appointed, while the prisoners, together with that important person, Donna Marina, were intrusted to an escort of three hundred Tlascalans and thirty Spanish soldiers.

The order of departure.

The main divisions of the army were arranged as follows. The brave Sandoval was intrusted with the vanguard. The baggage, the prisoners, and the artillery were to come next. Pedro de Alvarado was to bring up the rear-guard, consisting in great part of the troops of Narvaez. Cortes, with a few horsemen and one hundred foot soldiers, was to assist in the passage of the

centre of the army (of the weaker part, in fact), and was to be at hand wherever the pressure of the battle might be greatest. The sick and the wounded were not forgotten: they were to be taken upon the cruppers of the horse-soldiers. Having made these dispositions, Cortes then brought out the gold. Seven wounded horses, one mare belonging to Cortes, and eighty Tlascalans, were laden with the King's fifths, or with what could be carried of them. After this had been done, Cortes bade the soldiers take what they liked of the rest of the gold; and woe to him who encumbered himself with any! for, we are told, it was their destruction (*literally*, their "knife"),* and that he who took least gold, came best out of danger on this disastrous night.

The retreat commenced: the first bridge.

A little before midnight the stealthy march began. The Spaniards succeeded in laying down the pontoon over the first bridge-way, and the vanguard with Sandoval passed over; Cortes and

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* "Que los que quisiesen, tomasen del Tesoro que havia, á su voluntad, que fué su cuchillo, porque el que menos tomó, salió mejor del caso."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. II. lib. x. cap. 11.

his men also passed over; but, while the rest were passing, the Mexicans gave the alarm with loud shouts and blowing of horns. "Tlaltelulco,* Tlaltelulco!" they exclaimed, "come out quickly with your canoes: the *teules* are going; cut them off at the bridges." Almost immediately after this alarm, the lake was covered with canoes. It rained, and the misfortunes of the night commenced by two horses slipping from the pontoon into the water. Then, the Mexicans attacked the pontoon-bearers so furiously, that it was impossible for them to raise it up again. In a very short time the water at that part was full of dead horses, Tlascalan men, Indian women, baggage, artillery, prisoners, and boxes (*petacas*) which, I suppose, supported the pontoon. On every side the most piteous cries were heard, "Help me! I drown!" "Rescue me! they are killing me!" Such vain demands were mingled with prayers to the Virgin Mary and to Saint James. Those that did get upon the bridge and on the causeway, found bands of Mexican

The pontoon lost.

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* Tlaltelulco was the quarter of the town where the market was situated.

warriors ready to push them down again into the water.

The second bridge.

At the second bridge-way a single beam was found, which doubtless had been left for the convenience of the Mexicans themselves. This was useless for the horses; but Cortes diverging, found a shallow place where the water did not reach further than up to the saddle, and by that he and his horsemen passed (as Sandoval must have done before). He contrived, also, to get his foot-soldiers safely to the main-land, though whether they swam or waded, whether they kept the line of the causeway, or diverged into the shallows, it is difficult to determine. Leaving the vanguard and his own division safe on shore, Cortes with a small body of horse and foot, returned to give what assistance he could to those who were behind him. All order was now lost, and the retreat was little else than a confused slaughter, although small bodies of the Spaniards still retained sufficient presence of mind to act together, rushing forward, clearing the space about them, making their way at each moment with loss of life, but still some few survivors getting onwards. Few, indeed, of the rear-guard could

have escaped. It is told as a wonder of Alvarado, that, coming to the last bridge, he made a leap, which has by many been deemed impossible, and cleared the vast aperture. When Cortes came up to him, he was found accompanied only by seven soldiers, and eight Tlascalans, all covered with blood from their many wounds. They told Cortes that there was no use in going further back, that all who remained alive were there with them. Upon this the General turned; and the small and melancholy band of Spaniards pushed on to Tlacuba, Cortes protecting the rear. It is said that he sat down on a stone in a village called Popotla near Tlacuba, and wept; a rare occurrence, for he was not a man to waste any energy in weeping while aught remained to be done. The country was aroused against them, and they did not rest for the night till they had fortified themselves in a temple on a hill near Tlacuba, where afterwards was built a church dedicated, very appropriately, to Our Lady of Refuge (*á Nuestra Señora de los Remedios*).

The third bridge.

The remains of the army arrive at Tlacuba.

This memorable night has ever been celebrated in American history as *La noche triste.* In this flight from Mexico all the artillery was lost, and

Loss of men in the retreat of the *noche triste*.

there perished four hundred and fifty* Spaniards, amongst whom was Velazquez de Leon, one of the principal men in the expedition and a relation of the Governor of Cuba, four thousand of the Indian allies, forty-six horses, and most of the Mexican prisoners, including one son and two daughters of Montezuma, and his nephew the King of Tezcuco. A loss which posterity will ever regret was that of the books and accounts, memorials and writings, of which there were some, it is said, that contained a narrative of all that had happened since Cortes left Cuba.† The wisdom of the astrologer Botello did not save him (but what wise man is ever wise for himself!); and that any Spaniard remained alive seems to infer some negligence on the part of the Mexican conquerors.

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* Bernal Diaz estimates the number of Spaniards lost at eight hundred and seventy; Oviedo at eleven hundred and seventy. I have adopted in the text the numbers given by Gomara, but should not be surprised if they were proved to be understated.

† "Los Libros de la Cuenta, y Raçon de la Real Hacienda, y los Memoriales, y Escrituras pertenecientes á todo lo sucedido, desde que Cortés salió de Cuba."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. iv. cap. 71.

The error of the Spaniards, if error there were, was in taking only one pontoon.* The main error of the Mexicans was in not occupying the ground where the Spaniards would have to land, and in concentrating their forces at the bridges where there was not room for more than a certain number of them to act, and where they incommoded each other. The summary of the retreat I believe to be this: that the passage of the first bridge was successfully made, through means of the pontoon, by a large portion of the most serviceable persons in the little army, but that, even at that first point, there was great loss of life amongst the weaker portion, and of baggage, and artillery: that between the first bridge and the second there was almost a total destruction of the weaker, less mobile, and more laden part of the Spanish force: that, at the second bridge, by means of that beam which was fortunately there, a good number of those who would be called *sueltos*, active and skilful persons, and who were

Error of the Spaniards.

Of the Mexicans.

A summary of the retreat.

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* "Y si como llevaron una puente, fueran tres, pocos se perdieran."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. II. tom. ii. lib. x. cap. 11.

favoured by being in a forward position, contrived to pass; but that neither baggage, artillery, prisoners, nor men laden with bars of gold, ever passed that second fatal aperture: and, for the third, it seems to me that it could have been passed by those only who were able to swim, or who, having by chance diverged into a shallower part, waded through the water, and rejoined the causeway near the main-land. In the annals of retreats there has seldom been one recorded which proved more entirely disastrous. It occurred on the 1st of July, 1520.*

It took place, July, 1520.

Cortes proceeds to Tlascala.

From Tlacuba Cortes moved on towards the province of Tlascala, always fighting his way, and always encumbered with enemies. The night before he reached a certain valley, soon to be made celebrated by him, called the valley of Otumba, considering that every day the Spaniards were growing weaker and the enemy becoming bolder

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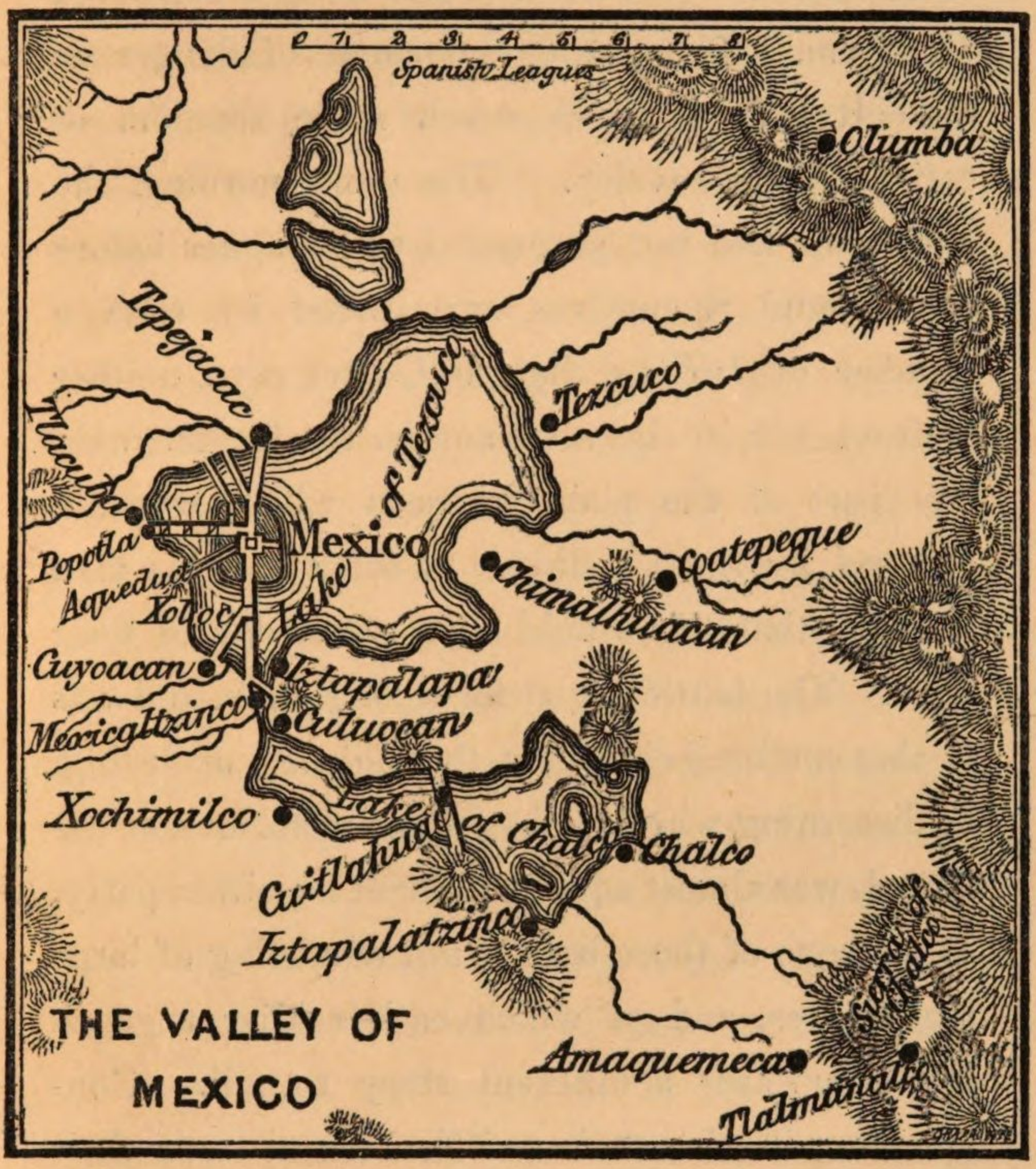
* Bernal Diaz says that it occurred on the 10th of July: but this is contradicted by a date which Cortes gives in his letter, when, speaking of the day after the battle of Otumba, he says that it was a Sunday, the 8th of July. "Que fué Domingo á ocho de Julio."—LORENZANA, p. 149.

and more numerous, he bethought him of a device, or, as he expresses it, the Holy Spirit enlightened



him with advice,* in reference to the manner of

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* "El Espíritu Santo me alumbró con este aviso."—LORENZANA, p. 148.

carrying the sick and wounded. They had hitherto been carried on horseback behind the fighting men, but he now caused litters to be constructed for them. This, at any moment of danger or difficulty, would give much more freedom of action to his cavalry. The next morning, the Spaniards had not proceeded two leagues before they found themselves surrounded by such a number of Indians that, as Cortes says, neither in front, nor in the rear, nor on the flanks, could any part of the plain be seen which was not covered by these Indians. Cortes and his men thought that this would be the last day of their

Battle of Otumba.

lives. The battle raged for a long time, and was of that confused character, that fighting, or fleeing, or discerning whether they were victorious or defeated, was almost equally difficult for either party. It was one of those battles not admitting of large manœuvres, and of which each soldier engaged has afterwards a different story to tell. Conspicuous in the ranks of the enemy was their General, with his outspread flag, his rich armour of gold, and his plumes of silver feathers. Towards this glittering centre Cortes and his best captains, after the fight had lasted some time, directed their

attack; and Cortes himself bore down the Mexican General to the ground. The Mexicans, seeing their General slain, fled; and in this manner the celebrated battle of Otumba was gained by the Spaniards. The description which Cortes gives of the main incident in it is very characteristic of him, from the modesty and simplicity with which it is given. His own words are these: "And we went fighting in that toilsome manner a great part of the day, until it pleased God that there was slain a person amongst the enemy who must have been the General; for with his death the battle altogether ceased."

Death of the Indian General.

The modesty of Cortes.

After the victory the Spaniards proceeded with much less fear and less harassment, although, to use the graphic expression of Cortes, the enemy still continued biting them (*mordiéndonos*), until they reached a small country house where they encamped for the night. From that spot they could perceive certain sierras in the territory of Tlascala, a most welcome sight to their eyes, although Cortes, who knew mankind well, was thoroughly aware of the difference of reception that they might meet with now that they came, not as prosperous men and conquerors, but as

poor men and fugitives. The next day they entered the province of Tlascala, and rested in a Tlascalan town three days. There, the principal Tlascalan Lords came to see them, and, instead of showing any coldness or unkindness, they laboured to console Cortes in his misfortune.

Speech of the Tlascalan Lords to Cortes, consoling him.

"Oh! Malinché, Malinché," they said, "how it grieves us to hear of your misfortunes, and of those of all your brothers, and of the multitude of our own men who have perished with yours. Have we not told you many times, that you should not trust in those Mexican people, for there was no security from one day to another that they would not make war upon you, and you would not believe us? But now the thing is done, and nothing more remains at present but to refresh you and to cure you. Wherefore, we will go immediately to our city, where you shall be lodged as it may please you." With these words, and words like these, of noble kindness, their good allies brought the Spaniards to the chief city of Tlascala, which they reached about the middle of July, 1520.

The Spaniards kindly received at Tlascala.

CHAPTER IX.

Resolution of the Tlascalan Senate—Cortes in Tepeaca—Forms a Great Alliance against the Mexicans—Prepares to march against Mexico—Reviews his Troops at Tlascala.

RETREATING, wounded, despoiled, having lost numbers of his own men, and the greater part of his allied troops, almost any other commander but Cortes would have been thoroughly cast down. Not so, this modern Cæsar, who only meditated to refresh himself by new combats. That section, however, of his men who had been the followers of Narvaez, and probably some of the others, did not share in the ardour of their chief. On the contrary, they counselled an instant march to Vera Cruz, fearing lest their present allies, uniting with their enemies, should occupy the passes between the town of

Tlascala and the sea. If Cortes had an intention of resuming the war with Mexico, their present repose, they thought, would but fatten them for sacrifice. Such was the common discourse, and such, indeed, were the representations which they made to Cortes himself. Moreover, when he did not give way to their suggestions, they drew up a formal requisition, in which they stated their loss of men, their want of horses, weapons, and ammunition, and upon these statements required him to march to Vera Cruz. The reply of Cortes to this requisition has been made for him by two considerable historians;* but as they did not write in concert, the speeches have not the slightest resemblance.† In one speech, he is made to allude to Xenophon, and to quote "Vegetius *De Re Militari;*" in the other (the chaplain's account), the deeds of Jonathan and David are brought in

Cortes is required to retreat to Vera Cruz.

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* Oviedo and Gomara.

† May that man who invented fictitious speech-making in history yet have to listen to innumerable speeches from dull men accustomed to address courts of law, or legislative assemblies! I wish him no further punishment, though he has been a most mischievous person to the human race.

by way of illustration. Cortes himself, who always speaks simply, tells the Emperor, that, recollecting how fortune favours the daring (*que siempre á los osados ayuda la fortuna*),—a proverb which he acted out so nobly, that of all men of his time he had most right to quote it; and also reflecting that any symptom of pusillanimity would bring down the Indians upon them, both friends and enemies, more quickly than anything else; and also considering, that he and his men were Christians, and that God "would not permit" that they should altogether perish, and that such a great country should be lost,—he determined on no account to descend towards the sea. Accordingly, he told his men that to quit the country would not only be shameful to him, and dangerous to all of them, but also treasonable to the King's service.

The view which Cortes took of his situation.

It is clear that Cortes was supported by a considerable section of his own men. Such is the statement of Bernal Diaz; and it is evident to me that this soldier-historian, for one, did not join with those who presented the aforesaid requisition, as, if he had accompanied the malcontents, instead of proving that there were certain gross

errors in the statements which Gomara puts into the mouth of Cortes, he would, I think, have asserted that the speech was altogether a fabrication. The truth is, that the men of Narvaez were of a richer class than the men of Cortes, and were much less compromised in his doings. Indeed, they taunted the others by saying that these had nothing but their persons to lose; while they maintained that the desire to command was that which induced Cortes himself to persevere.*

Mexico sends ambassadors to Tlascala.

Meanwhile, as great, if not a greater, danger threatened Cortes from another quarter. The Mexicans sent ambassadors to the government of Tlascala with a present of garments, feathers, and salt. These ambassadors, being admitted into the Tlascalan senate, referred to the identity of lineage, laws, and language between the Mexicans and the Tlascalans; spoke of their ancient enterprises in arms together, and of a friendship between the two nations which had been broken by a question

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* "Y mas dezian, que nuestro Cortés, por mandar, y siempre ser señor, y nosotros los que con el passavamos, no tener que perder, sino nuestras personas, assistiamos con él."—Bernal Diaz, cap. 129.

of religion ;* and then said, that it would be well that the present state of hostility should be put an end to, and that the Tlascalans should not be deprived of those productions which abounded in the Mexican Empire. This last argument was an allusion to the commerce in salt, of which the patriotic Tlascalans had long deprived themselves. The Mexican ambassadors added, that, in order that the two nations might come to terms, it would be necessary that these few Christians should be sacrificed, with whom their gods were very angry. Finally, the Mexicans concluded by saying (which was the most effective appeal they could make), that the Spaniards would insult the Tlascalans as they had insulted them.

Speech of the Mexican ambassadors.

The senate received the presents, and said that they would consider the matter. The ambassadors

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* "Qu'ensuite une question de religion avait altéré leur amitié, et qu'il en était résulté les discordes qui étaient nées par la suite."—IXTLILXOCHITL, *Hist. des Chichimèques*, cap. 90.

This record of a religious difference between the two nations deserves attention from the student of pre-Spanish American history, and might lead to some curious and important discovery.

having left the Audience Chamber, the debate began. The chief speakers were Maxitcatzin* and Xicotencatl the younger (*el mozo*); the former always friendly to the Spaniards, the latter their determined enemy. It was a great debate, in which much was to be said on both sides. Honour and faith were with Maxitcatzin, and perhaps even the balance of policy was in his favour; but much was to be said upon the other side; and, with all their courteous reticence, it must not be supposed that the Tlascalans had not felt very deeply the total loss of that part of their army which had accompanied the Spaniards to Mexico, and the disgrace of the flight. Some reproaches, even, had been addressed to the Spaniards upon this point; though, no doubt, these had been uttered only, or chiefly, by people of the lower classes. Xicotencatl main-

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* These uncouth Mexican names were, I have no doubt, much softer and more tolerable than they appear. In this name, the last syllable "tzin," is a title of honour; and that the name was pronounced much more softly than the appearance of it in writing might lead us to suppose, may be inferred from the corruption of the name which appears in Bernal Diaz, namely, "Masse Escaci."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 129.

tained that it would be better to enter into the Mexican confederacy, and to uphold their ancient customs, than to learn the new ones of this foreign people, an irrepressible race, who wished to have the command in everything. "Now was the time," he said, "to adopt this counsel, when the Spaniards were routed and dispirited."

Debate in the Tlascalan senate.

It is probable, as often happens in difficult dilemmas, that neither of the two opposite courses suggested would have sufficed to save the Tlascalans, for even if they had deserted Cortes now, the Mexicans would never have forgiven them for having in the first instance received and favoured the Spaniards. Still, however little chance of escape by wisdom there was for the Tlascalans, it is seldom that a more important council has been held; for certainly if the Tlascalan senate had gone with Xicotencatl the younger, the Spanish conquest must have been deferred, and might have taken place under very different auspices. The debate waxed warm; so warm, indeed, that Maxitcatzin struck his opponent, who was precipitated down a flight of stairs, the debate having been held in an oratory. A miraculous

turn has been given to the story, such as that a cloud was seen to enter the room and rest upon a cross which was there, and that the members of the council were influenced by this miraculous interposition.* We need not, however, depreciate the generous disposition of the Tlascalans by imagining any miraculous interference as needful to confirm it. They admired their allies, the Spaniards; they had fought side by side with them; they were willing to share their reverses, and to throw in their lot with that of these skilful and enduring strangers. In a word, the counsel of Maxitcatzin prevailed, and, though they knew it not, the fate of the Tlascalans was therein decided also. Henceforth their great city, with its numerous population, was to dwindle

The Tlascalans resolve to abide by their alliance with the Spaniards.

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* "Tous ceux qui étaient présents virent entrer une nuée qui couvrit la croix, et toute la salle resta dans l'obscurité. Ils (Maxizcatzin et Xicotencatl) en vinrent aux mains; Maxizcatzin lui donna un coup de poing si violent qu'il le renversa en bas de l'escalier qui est à l'entrée de la salle. Tous les membres de l'assemblée, témoins d'un si grand miracle, furent ébranlés et adoptèrent l'opinion de Maxizcatzin."—IXTLILXOCHITL, *Histoire des Chichimèques*, cap. 90.

away under the shade of their engrossing allies, until it should become, as it is to be seen in our time, a petty country town.*

It was, perhaps, from policy, perhaps from a grand politeness, which is to be noticed amongst these Indians, that Maxitcatzin did not mention to Cortes anything about this Mexican embassy. The intelligence, however, reached his ear, it is said, from other quarters; and, curiously enough, the rival chieftain Xicotencatl, seeing that it was useless to oppose Cortes, came and offered his

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* "The ancient numerous population of Tlascala is no longer found within its limits, and perhaps not more than four or five thousand individuals now inhabit it. But the town is, nevertheless, handsome;—its streets are regular; its private houses, town hall, bishop's palace, and principal church, are built in a style of tasteful architecture, while on the remains of the chief Teocalli (temple) of the ancient Tlascalans, a Franciscan convent has been built, which is perhaps one of the earliest ecclesiastical edifices in the Republic. In the town itself and in its vicinity many relics and ruins of the past glory of Tlascala are still found by antiquarians, but they have hitherto been undisturbed by foreign visitors, and remain unnoticed by the natives."—Brantz Mayer's *Mexico, Aztec, Spanish and Republican*, vol. ii. lib. v. cap. 4. Hartford, U.S. 1852.

Cortes resolves to invade Tepeaca.

services to him in an expedition which Cortes now proposed to make against Tepeaca, a country lying southward, the inhabitants of which were inimical to the Tlascalans, and also to Cortes, having intercepted and slain ten or twelve Spaniards who were coming from Vera Cruz to Mexico. These Tepeacans, moreover, were allies of the Mexicans.

The persuasive Cortes proved equally successful with his own men as with the Tlascalans. The men of Narvaez murmured, but they went; and Cortes, on quitting Tlascala, which he did at the end of twenty-two days after his return to that city, found himself at the head of a large army, amounting to no less than one hundred and fifty thousand men. Among these the Cholulans were to be found as allies.

The world is too old, and there is too little time now, for listening to a minute account of the fate of any province or nation which has not contrived to make itself known for anything but its disasters. We cannot, therefore, do more than say that Tepeaca was swiftly subdued, and that the people in that part of the country where the Spaniards had been intercepted, were made slaves,

Cortes alleging that they were cannibals, and also that he wished to terrify the Mexicans,— declaring at the same time a favourite doctrine of his, namely, that the people were so numerous, that unless a "great and cruel chastisement" were made amongst them, they would never be amended.* Cortes then founded a town in that district, which he called La Segura de la Frontera.

Cruel policy of Cortes.

La Segura de la Frontera founded.

For the reason above given, it will be needless to enter into all the wars and forays that Cortes undertook at this period. Suffice it to say, that wherever he met the Mexican troops, he routed them, conquering also their allies, and receiving the conquered provinces into the friendship and under the vassalage of the King of Spain. It is observable that the towns and fortresses were well built. Of a town, for instance, called Yzzucán,

Successes of Cortes in the provinces of New Spain.

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* "Porque demás de haber muerto á los dichos Españoles, y rebeladose contra el Servicio de Vuestra Alteza, comen todos carne humana, por cuya notoriedad no embio á Vuestra Magestad probanza de ello. Y tambien me movió á facer los dichos Esclavos, por poner algun espanto á los de Culúa: y porque tambien hay tanta Gente, que si no ficiesse grande, y cruel castigo en ellos, nunca se emendarían jamás."—LORENZANA, p. 154.

Cortes says, "It is very well arranged as regards its streets, and has a hundred temples."* Of Guacachula he says, "It is surrounded by a strong wall twenty feet high, with a battlement two feet and a half high." It had four entrances, so constructed, that the walls overlapped one another. Again, of the provinces of Zuzula and Tamazula, Cortes mentions, that they were thickly populated, and the houses better built than any that the Spaniards had seen elsewhere in the New World.† It is necessary to remark these things, as otherwise it might be supposed that Mexico, as it was the central point of the Conquest, was the only centre of civilization; whereas, a certain kind of well-being, and some knowledge of the arts of life, were spread over a considerable portion of America, and might be traced, indeed, from

Other fine towns in New Spain besides Mexico.

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* "Esta Ciudad de Yzzucán será de hasta tres, ó quatro mil Vecinos, es muy concertada en sus Calles, y Tratos, tenia cien Casas de Mezquitas, y Oratorios muy fuertes con sus Torres: las quales todas se quemaron." —LORENZANA, p. 164.

† "Habia muy grandes Poblaciones, y Casas muy bien obradas, de mejor Cantería, que en ninguna de estas Partes se había visto."—LORENZANA, p. 162.

a point further south than Cusco, in Peru (following the Andes, the spinal column of that great continent), to California.

The result of the exertions of Cortes at this period, namely, from July to December in the year 1520, was to form a great defensive and offensive alliance against the Mexicans, and to render an attack upon that country, not merely a splendid and chivalrous attempt, but an enterprise entirely consistent with the rules of that prudence, into which the valour of Cortes was welded as the blade of the sword is to its handle.

Great alliance against the Mexicans.

This enterprise Cortes had, probably, never abandoned for one single moment. To the Emperor he emphatically says, "My determined resolution was to return upon the men of that great city."* Accordingly, he had not devoted all his energies to gaining or subduing provinces more or less obscure, but had bethought him of what would certainly be requisite in any attack to be made upon Mexico. He had despatched, for

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* "Mi determinada voluntad era, rebolver sobre los de aquella gran Ciudad."—LORENZANA, p. 178.

instance, four ships (the same that had been sent out under the command of Narvaez to subdue him) to Hispaniola for horses—he justly puts those animals first—men, arms, and ammunition. Then, with still more forethought, he had given orders for brigantines to be constructed in separate pieces at Tlascala, and over this work he had placed a skilful artificer, named Martin Lopez. He had written to the Emperor, detailing the events which had befallen him, and the plans which he cherished; and, in a word, he had neglected nothing which would conduce to the success of his great undertaking.

Cortes orders brigantines to be constructed at Tlascala.

The Mexicans not inactive.

It remains to be seen, what, in the meanwhile, the Mexicans, who also were not the men to fold their arms while they were on the eve of battle, had done on their side to meet their vigorous and determined enemy. They, too, had sought to make new alliances and to strengthen old ones; and their diplomatic efforts had not been so unsuccessful in other places as they had proved in Tlascala. They had sought to secure their tributaries, not by harshness, but by the remission of one year's tribute, on condition that they should wage

unceasing war against the Spaniards. In their own vicinity, the Mexicans built walls, formed entrenchments, and dug fosses; and they fabricated a new kind of arms,—long lances, especially destined to repel the cavalry of their opponents.

It had not been permitted to the Mexicans to devote their time and energies to the future alone. Already, they had found much to contend against, for even when they had got rid of Cortes and his men, they had still two terrible enemies within their city, civil discord and contagious disease. We learn from Indian authorities,* that immediately after the Spaniards had fled from Mexico, a great contention arose between those Mexicans who had at all befriended the Spaniards, and the rest of the townsmen. In the combats which then took place, two of Montezuma's sons perished.†

Discord and pestilence in Mexico.

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* "Dícese en un Memorial, que dexó escrito el Indio, que se halló en la Conquista, (que despues de Christiano aprendió á Leer y Escrivir, el qual tengo en mi poder) que luego que los Españoles salieron de la Ciudad, huvo diferencias grandes entre los Mexicanos."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. iv. cap. 73.

† This is confirmed, incidentally, to a certain extent,

In the meanwhile, Cortes, having subdued the provinces adjacent to La Segura, was willing to allow some of the men of Narvaez to return to Cuba, on the ground, as he informed his own partisans, "that it was better to be alone than ill-accompanied."* Previously, however, to their departure, a division was made of that part of the spoil which consisted of slaves; and the proceedings in this matter deserve special attention. These slaves were first collected together, and then branded with the letter "G," which signified *guerra* (war). A fifth was taken for the King; then, another fifth for Cortes; and the rest were divided amongst the men. We naturally picture to our minds, when reading of slaves of war, that they were strong men, who having come out to fight, had been conquered by stronger or more valiant men, and that the penalty of defeat was

A division of slaves amongst the Spaniards.

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in the conversation which Montezuma's son-in-law, Johan Cano, had with Oviedo (see "Hist. de las Indias," lib. xxxiii. cap. liv. p. 549), though Cano throws the blame upon the new Monarch of having ordered the death of one of Montezuma's sons.

* "Que valia mas estar solos, que mal acompañados." —Bernal Diaz, cap. 136.

servitude,—a transaction which does not shock us much, especially in an age, comparatively speaking, barbarous. But, in this case, and, doubtless, in many others, we should have been much astonished if the slaves had been paraded before us, seeing that they consisted of boys, girls, and young women, for the Spanish soldiers would not make slaves of the men, because they were so troublesome to guard; and, besides, the Spaniards had already, in their Tlascalan friends, men who were ready to do any hard work for them.*

The age and sex of the slaves.

The Spanish soldiers were very much dissatisfied with the mode of division adopted by Cortes. They had brought together to the marking-house their private spoil of human beings; they had even begun to civilize their female captives by clothing them;† and now, after the King and

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* "Todos ocurrimos con todas las Indias muchachas, y muchachos que aviamos avido, que de hombre de edad no nos curavamos dellos, que eran malos de guardar, y no aviamos menester, su servicio, teniendo á nuestros amigos los Tlascaltecas.—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 135."

† "Les avian dado enaguas, y camisas."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 135.

Cortes, and, probably, the other great officers, had taken their share of the spoil, there were no women left but those who were feeble and aged (*davan nos las viejas y ruinas*). The soldiers were very angry. "Were there two kings in the land?" they exclaimed. When these murmurings reached Cortes, he endeavoured to appease the men, addressing them mildly, and swearing by his conscience (a favourite oath of his), that, henceforth, the slaves should be sold by auction.

The Spanish soldiers murmur.

Cortes quits La Segura, Dec. 1520.

These important affairs having been settled, Cortes quitted La Segura in the middle of December, 1520, to return to Tlascala. On his road, he stopped at Cholula, where the people much desired his arrival, as many of their chiefs were dead, and they wished him to nominate others in their place, which he consented to do.

This transaction is notable, as it shows in what high esteem Cortes was held by the natives; but it is also far more notable, on account of the disease of which these chiefs had perished. A black man in the troop of Narvaez had fallen ill of the small-pox, and from him the infection rapidly spread throughout New Spain, and became an

The small pox in New Spain: its ravages.

important element in the subjugation of the country. It has been maintained, and with some likelihood, that this was the first introduction of that terrible disease into the Continent of America, and that the natives, being unaccustomed to deal with it, and resorting to bathing as a means of cure, perished in great numbers. There is also another theory which has been maintained in modern times, and which would account for the fatality of this disease amongst the Indians, whether it were newly introduced or not. This theory is, that the diseases of a strong people have a strength which cannot be fought against by a weaker people. Had the small-pox been bred amongst the Indians themselves, they would, it is contended, have been able to make a better resistance to it; but coming from the Spaniards through this negro (also of a stronger race than the Indians), the new recipients were not able to make head against it. However this may be (and such questions are very interesting for the physiologist), it is certain that the arrival of Narvaez and his men, affording at first a bright gleam of hope to the Mexicans, was deeply injurious to them in three ways: in the generation of this

A question for physiologists.

The arrival of Narvaez: how it proved ruinous to the Mexicans.

fatal disease; in the addition made to the forces of Cortes; and in his compelled absence from Mexico, at a most critical period, when the hopes of the Mexicans and the cruel folly of Alvarado led to that outbreak which was the distinct and direct cause of the future disasters of that kingdom.

Cortes at Tlascala again.

From Cholula Cortes moved on to his friendly Tlascalans, amongst whom he was received with every demonstration of joy,—with triumphal arches, dances, songs, and waving of banners. But there was sad news for him in the death, by the prevalent disease, of his faithful friend and adherent, Maxitcatzin. Cortes put on mourning for this Chief; and, at the request of the State, appointed his son, a youth of twelve or thirteen years of age, to succeed him. He also made the boy a knight, and had him baptized, naming him "Don Juan Maxitcatzin."

Cortes appoints a successor to Maxitcatzin.

The day after Christmas Day (the 26th of December, 1520), Cortes reviewed his troops, and found that they consisted of forty horsemen and five hundred and fifty foot soldiers, eighty of whom were either cross-bowmen or musketeers. He had also eight or nine cannon, but very little gun-

powder. He formed his horsemen into four divisions, and his foot-soldiers into nine. He then addressed them saying, that they knew how they and he, to serve His Sacred Majesty, the Emperor, had made a settlement in that country, and how the inhabitants of it had acknowledged their vassalage to His Majesty, continuing to act for some time as such vassals, receiving good offices from the Spaniards, and returning such offices to them. How, without any cause (such are his words, and we may well wonder what had become of that conscience which he was wont to swear by, when he uttered them), the inhabitants of Mexico and of all the provinces subject to them, had not only rebelled against His Majesty, but had killed many friends and relations of the Spaniards there present, and had driven them out of the land. He then passed to the main point of his discourse,— namely, that the Spaniards should return upon their former steps and regain that which they had lost. He advanced the following reasons for the prosecution of the war with Mexico; first, that it was a war for the furtherance of the Faith, and against a barbarous nation; secondly, that it was for the service of His Majesty; thirdly, for

Speech of Cortes to his troops.

That they should reconquer Mexico.

the security of their own lives: and then he brought forward as a topic, not so much in the way of reason as of encouragement, the alliances which the Spaniards had secured in aid of this their great enterprise. He afterwards told them that he had made certain ordinances for the government of the army, which he begged them carefully to observe.*

His men assent.

He received a suitable reply from his men, who declared that they were ready to die for the Faith, and for the service of His Majesty; that they would recover what was lost, and take vengeance for the "treason" which the Mexicans and their allies had committed against them.

The ordinances were proclaimed by sound of trumpet, and the Spaniards returned to their quarters.

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* "Que ninguno blasfemase el Santo Nombre de Dios.
"Que no riñese un Español con otro.
"Que no jugase Armas, ni Caballo.
"Que no forçasen Mugeres.
"Que nadie tomase Ropa, ni captivase Indios, ni hiciese correrías, ni saquease sin licencia suia, í acuerdo del Cabildo.
"Que no injuriasen á los Indios de Guerra Amigos, ni diesen á los de carga."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 119. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. 2.

Review of the Tlascalan troops.

The next day the Tlascalans held their review, and, as these were the allies whom Cortes greatly relied upon, it will be well to give an account of the review, especially as it comes to us on the authority of an historian who had access to the papers of the Spanish officer intrusted with all the arrangements connected with these allies.

First of all came the military musicians: then the four Lords of the four quarters of the city, magnificently arrayed after their fashion. They were adorned with a rich mass of plumage* which rose from their shoulders a yard in height, and towered above their heads; precious stones hung from their ears and from their thick lips; their hair was bound by a band of gold or silver; on their feet there were splendid sandals.

Behind these chiefs came four pages bearing their bows and arrows.† They themselves carried

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* Those who are familiar with engravings representing the ruins of the ancient American temples will have no difficulty in recognizing this head-dress. It furnishes another proof that these temples were built by men of this race.

† "Saliéndoles de las Espaldas, una Vara en alto, sobre la Cabeça, mui ricos Plumages, encaxadas Piedras ricas, en los Agujeros de las Orejas, y beços, y el Cabel-

swords (*macanas*)* and shields. Then came four standard-bearers, carrying the standards of each seignory, which had their arms depicted upon them. Then came sixty thousand bowmen, passing in files of twenty, the standards emblazoned with the arms of the captain of each company appearing at intervals. As the standard-bearers approached the Spanish General, they lowered their standards; whereupon he rose and took off his fur cap. The whole company, then, in a graceful manner, bowed, and shot their arrows into the air. Then came forty thousand shield-bearers, but it is not mentioned what arms for offence they carried; and, lastly, ten thousand pikemen.

Cortes addressed the Tlascalan Chiefs in a very skilful speech, in the course of which he told them that he was going to take his departure

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lo tomado con una Vanda de Oro, ó Plata, en los Piés, ricas Cotaras, tras ellos quatro Pages, con sus Arcos, y Flechas."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. iv. cap. 81.

* These swords were made of wood, but probably had sharp facets made of flint or of obsidian, and might be made to inflict a very ugly wound.

the next day, to enter into the territory of their common enemy, the Mexicans; but that the city of Mexico could not be captured without the aid of those brigantines which were being built at Tlascala. He, therefore, begged his allies to furnish the Spaniards who were left to build these vessels with all the means of doing so, and to treat them well, as they always had done, in order that the vessels might be ready, when, if God should give him the victory, he should send from the city of Tezcuco for them. The Tlascalans replied with enthusiasm that they would die where he died, so that they might revenge themselves upon the men of Mexico, their principal enemies; that, with regard to the brigantines, they would not only do what he told them, but when the vessels were finished, they would convey them to Mexico; and that then the whole Tlascalan force would accompany him to the war.

Cortes confides his ship-wrights to the good offices of the Tlascalans.

END OF VOL. I.

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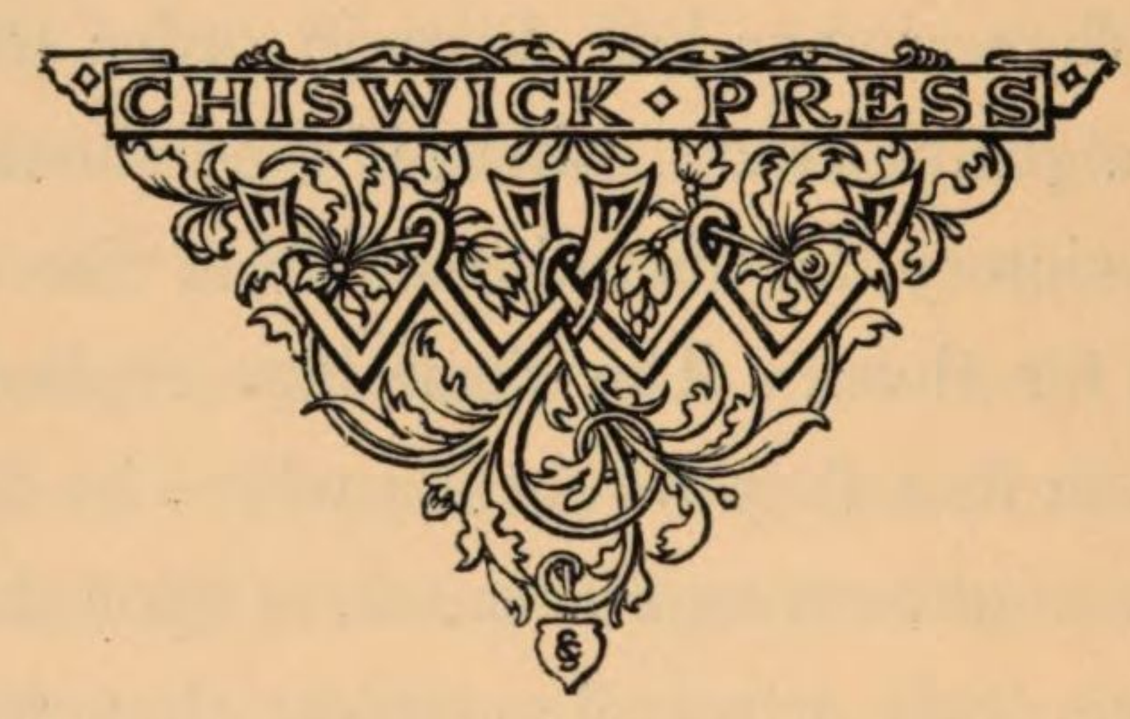

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